THE ISLAMIC WORLD
ISLAMIC
ART, LITERATURE, AND CULTURE
EDITED BY KATHLEEN KUIPER
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EDITED BY KATHLEEN KUIPER, MANAGER, ARTS AND CULTURE

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

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On the cover: Visitors tour the Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in 2008. This mosque will be the third largest in the world when it is complete. It contains several traditional elements of Islamic architecture and design, including ornate wall patterns, arched columns, and a domed ceiling. *Karim Sahib/AFP/Getty Images*

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Introduction

The Islamic world contains a rich tradition of extraordinary literature and visual arts that stretches back for centuries. At various times, these arts have influenced—and been influenced by—Western literary and artistic traditions. Yet most Westerners know as little about Islamic literature and visual arts as they do about Islam itself. Popular works such as *The Thousand and One Nights* and vague notions of tiled mosques or lavish palaces (frequently derived from Western fiction) are often the extent of Westerners' knowledge of Islamic arts. Viewing Islamic art through the lens of such works is roughly akin to trying to understand the full scope of Western literature and visual arts through popular romance novels and fairy-tale castles. The approach is neither realistic nor fair.

This unenlightened view was shattered with the tragic events of September 11, 2001, when many Americans replaced their naive notions of the exotic Orient with an outright rejection of a mostly unknown religion and all its worshippers. This attitude may be further exacerbated by the prejudice some feel toward the arts in general, that art has no connection to daily life and that it serves no useful purpose. Yet if those notions are accurate, why are the arts so intimately interwoven with human history? The truth is that the creation and appreciation of art is an integral part of what it means to be human. Tens of thousands of years ago—long before writing existed—people painted pictures on cave walls and carved small figures. Before there was writing, there was spoken language, which storytellers used to create an oral tradition that was an essential means of transmitting the fundamental principles of human society and institutions. The best among them could enthrall audiences with long, complex tales. After the invention of writing, many of these stories and poems were recorded, becoming some of the first works of literature.

Since that time, peoples around the world have used an immense variety of materials to create innumerable artworks in a myriad of forms and styles. The effort to understand and appreciate these artworks is both a challenging and exhilarating undertaking, not only for the sheer vastness of the task, but also because art serves different purposes at different times and in different cultures. Similarity of form does not necessarily mean similarity of purpose. Ancient Egyptians, for example, placed the organs of the dead in vessels called canopic jars. Westerners today may use similarly shaped vases to hold freshly cut flowers. On the other hand, strikingly different forms may serve similar purposes. Both Quakers and Muslims, for example, needed places to worship and desired to create structures they believed would be pleasing to God, instructive to believers, and in keeping with the tenets of their faith. For Quakers, that often meant plain, simple, unadorned wooden buildings. While Muslims also often worship in spaces without ornamentation or elaboration, enormous, elaborately decorated mosques covered with colourful tiles were considered just as appropriate.

Just as the purposes of art have varied over time and among cultures, so too have the dominant modes. Literature was the preeminent art form of early Islam, and it has retained its high status over the centuries. There are several reasons for this. One is that a solid foundation existed upon which to build Islamic literature. This foundation had been laid in Arabia, Islam's homeland, long before the birth of the religion's founder, the Prophet Muhammad. Arabs had developed a highly sophisticated oral literary tradition. One reason for the attention lavished on verbal arts may lie in the migratory lifestyle of the Bedouin, the nomadic desert Arabs. A nomadic way of life imposes certain limits on the art forms a culture develops. Architecture, for example, does not become a major art

form, and there is little motivation to create any sort of large-scale art that would be difficult if not impossible to transport easily. Verbal arts, however, are ideal for nomadic cultures.

Poetry held pride of place as an expression of pre-Islamic Arab identity and of communal history. Poets were highly esteemed, and their performances were viewed as powerful tools that could rouse warriors for battle or champion their tribe's virtues. Elegies—poems in praise of the dead—also constituted a major poetic form. Prose was important, too, particularly the rhymed prose of oracles. Other prose forms included tales of adventure and battle days. One influential prose genre, or form, was the "nighttime conversation." In this genre, the teller developed the central theme not through storytelling but by leading the listener's mind from topic to topic through verbal association. Such a complex, subtle prose form could only exist in a society in which spoken language held an elevated status.

Another reason for literature's preeminent place among Islamic arts is the Qur'an—the Muslim holy book—itself. For Muslims, the Qur'an is God's own word, recorded in the language chosen by God (Allah)—Arabic. This meant the Qur'an is the supreme and inimitable expression of literary beauty, and Arabic is the vehicle for it. Such a view esteems literature written in Arabic as the highest art form possible.

Yet another reason for literature's dominance is that therewas a prohibition against images in Islamic art. By the middle of the 8th century, the prohibition had become well-established Islamic doctrine, although the Qur'an itself says nothing one way or the other about images. While the ban on images did not, of course, result in a total lack of visual art, it did help promote the status of literature.

As Islam spread, largely through conquest, the literary traditions and forms of the conquered territories helped to mold Islamic writing. After the Arab conquest of Iran in 640, Persian literature influenced Islamic literature, and Persian became a significant language for Islamic writings. Persian poets introduced epic poetry such as the *Shah-nameh* ("Book of Kings"), which is a mix of myth, legend, and history. The finest lyric poems were written in Persian. It became traditional to use Persian for court poems, such as *roba'iyat*. This type of poem is best known in the West through the rather free translations, such as *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam.* Iran also introduced new prose genres into Islamic writing, such as the type known as the Mirror for Princes, which used stories to teach rulers proper political practice. Sufis—who practice a mystical form of Islam—produced a wide range of prose writings in genres that were not part of Arabic literary traditions, including letters, collections of conversations by leading sheikhs, mystical commentaries on the Qur'an, treatises on mystical subjects, and biographies. Persian literature also introduced topics that reflected the Sunni and Shi'ite division within Islam. Most Muslims are Sunni. In 1501, when the Safavid dynasty came to power in Iran, many were converted to Islam's second-largest division, Shi'ism. Persian writers and poets produced works on Shi'ite topics, especially the martyrdom of the twelve imams, the descendants of the Prophet who were leaders of Shi'ism following the Prophet's death.

Persian culture extended beyond Iran, and Islamic literature written in Persian was produced in northwestern India and what is now Pakistan as early as the 11th century and in what is today Turkey by the 13th century. Islamic writings in languages other than Persian, written by people other than elite poets, also appeared in these regions.

In parts of India, ordinary people produced folk poetry interpreting Islamic mysticism in their native languages, while Sufi poets in Turkey wrote verses in various Turkish dialects.

As Islam spread eastward, writers in Central Asia produced works not only in Arabic and Persian, but also in Turkic languages such as Uzbek, Tatar, and Kyrgyz. In East Asia, Islamic literature in Chinese has been found in China and the Philippines. Historical and semimythical tales of Islamic heroes form an interesting part of the Chinese writings.

Islam also spread westward, across North Africa and into Spain, which Muslims invaded in 711. From there, Islamic literature influenced the poetry of French troubadours as well as the romances and heroic tales of western Europe.

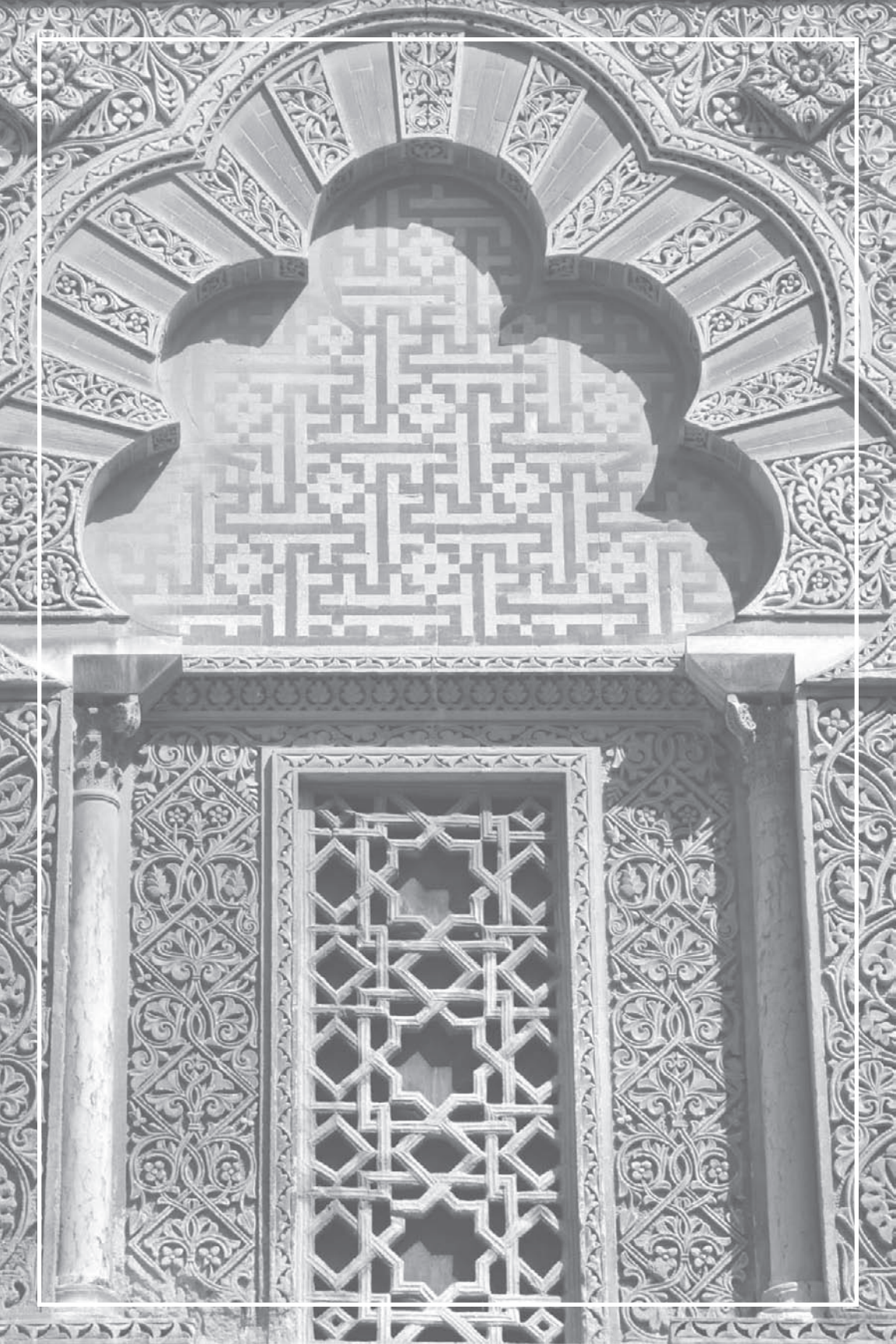
Although literature was the preeminent Islamic art form, it was not the only one. The visual arts have played a part in Islamic culture, although their forms and importance have varied across time and across regions. Several factors—some of which have already been mentioned—shaped the development of Islamic visual arts. One was the previously-stated prohibition against images. This ban was based partly on the desire to avoid idolatry and partly on the idea that only Allah can create life and anyone who creates images of living things seeks to rival Allah. Another determinant was the fact that pre-Islamic Arab culture had little art, other than oral poetry and prose, on which to build specifically Islamic visual arts. So, over time, Muslims adapted many of the forms, styles, and subjects of the cultures they conquered.

Wherever their religion spread, Muslims also had the need for a clean, appropriate place for prayer. Thus it was that architecture—especially religious architecture—became the most important Islamic visual art.

The original community that grew up around the Prophet had no special structure for gathering and prayer. Rather, they simply gathered in the Prophet's house to hear a sermon and to pray. As Islam spread, special buildings called mosques, or *masjid*s, were built for the Muslim community in each conquered area. These buildings were more community centres than religious structures. The faithful not only prayed in them, but also used them to conduct social, political, educational, and religious affairs. Little is known about these early mosques. None survive, and descriptions exist for only a few of the larger ones. These descriptions suggest that Muslims were forced to create a new architectural type because no existing architectural form met their needs. The building type they created was known as a hypostyle structure—a building that has a roof resting on rows of columns. The three most important features of these mosques were the *qiblah* wall, toward which the faithful prayed; the *minbar*, or pulpit, for the imam; and the mihrab, a highly decorated niche in the *qiblah* wall that probably represented the Prophet's symbolic presence. Where it was practical, early Muslims also converted existing structures of other religions into mosques. The Great Mosque of Damascus was built in the early 700s on a site previously occupied first by a Roman temple and then by an early Christian church. The Roman towers, which were still standing, were used as minarets to call believers to prayer. While the earliest mosques were simple affairs, over time, mosques came to be richly decorated inside and out with marble, mosaics, woodwork, and tile. Incorporated into the decoration were ornate arabesques, which represented the infinity of Allah and had a rigorous mathematical structure that transformed them from images of living things into symbols. The decoration also included calligraphy, which provides yet more evidence of the primacy of the word in Islamic arts.

The other major Islamic architectural form was the palace. There were three basic palace types. The rural complex had a residential unit composed of a square building with an ornate entrance, a courtyard surrounded by a portico, and two floors of rooms. There was also a small mosque and a separate bath with an ornate entrance and a richly decorated hall. Little is known about the other two palace types. The urban palace functioned as both living space and government centre. The palace-city, the third palace type, was exactly what it sounds like—an immense complex, surrounded by a wall, that was so large that it constituted an entire city.

While architecture is a dominant Islamic art, it is supported by a number of less immediately imposing arts. For example, mosques contained carved wooden stands to hold the Qur'an, decorated lamps and candlesticks, and prayer mats. Muslims also produced beautiful metalwork, glass, pottery, and carpets. Sheets of calligraphy adorned walls of homes, and tiles containing calligraphy of a religious nature—such as the name of Muhammed—can be found on many a mosque. Perhaps surprising, in view of the prohibition against images, is the amount of painted imagery of people that survives. Even in Islam's early days, pictures in private dwellings were tolerated. Later, miniature painting—the images that adorn manuscripts—developed in Iran and spread to India and Turkey. Miniatures appear in books on secular topics and include subjects such as hunts, feasts, romances, myths, and battle scenes.

Much remains to be learned and understood about Islamic art, which became the focus of serious study as an independent field only in the 20th century. This guide to the art, literature, and culture of the Islamic world will serve readers as a useful resource for beginning to understand centuries of creativity, faith, and tradition.

Chapter 1

The Varieties of Islamic Culture

The peoples who have embraced Islam form what the Armenian American scholar Vartan Gregorian has called a mosaic, not a monolith. They are widely various, inhabiting traditional lands, industrialized European cities, and every terrain in between. They practice business, plant crops, and herd cattle, and they speak a multitude of languages. Though they are unified by their belief in the Qur'an and the use of Arabic in worship, they also retain their distinct ethnic identities. This chapter discusses a small but representative sample of groups whose populations are largely, if not wholly, Muslim.

ARABS

An Arab is commonly defined as anyone whose native language is Arabic. Before the spread of Islam and, with it, the Arabic language, Arab referred to any of the largely nomadic Semitic inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula. In modern usage, it embraces any of the Arabic-speaking peoples living in the vast region from Mauritania, on the

Atlantic coast of Africa, to southwestern Iran, including the entire Maghrib (the region of North Africa bordering the Mediterranean Sea), Egypt and The Sudan, the Arabian Peninsula, and Syria and Iraq.

This diverse assortment of peoples defies physical stereotyping, because there is considerable regional variation. The early Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula were predominantly nomadic pastoralists who herded their sheep, goats, and camels through the harsh desert environment. Settled Arabs practiced date and cereal agriculture in the oases, which also served as trade centres for the caravans transporting the spices, ivory, and gold of southern Arabia and the Horn of Africa to the civilizations farther north. The distinction between the desert nomads, on the one hand, and town dwellers and agriculturists, on the other, still pervades much of the Arab world.

Islam, which developed in the west-central Arabian Peninsula in the early 7th century CE, was the religious force that united the desert subsistence nomads—the Bedouins—with the town dwellers of the oases. Within a century, Islam spread throughout most of the present-day Arabic-speaking world, and beyond, from Central Asia to the Iberian Peninsula. Arabic, the language of the Islamic sacred scripture (the Qur'an), was adopted throughout much of the Middle East and North Africa as a result of the rapidly established supremacy of Islam in those regions. Other elements of Arab culture, including the veneration of the desert nomad's life, were integrated with many local traditions. Arabs of today, however, are not exclusively Muslim; approximately 5 percent of the native speakers of Arabic worldwide are Christians, Druzes, Jews, or animists.

The majority of Arabs continue to live in small, isolated farming villages, where traditional values and occupations prevail, including the subservience and home seclusion

(*purdah*) of women. While urban Arabs tend to identify themselves more by nationality than by tribe, village farmers venerate the pastoral nomad's way of life and claim kinship ties with the great desert tribes of the past and present. Nationalism and the change in standards of living that have been made possible by the expanded oil industry, however, have radically altered the nomadic life.

The pastoral desert nomad, the traditional ideal of Arab culture, makes up barely 5 percent of the modern Arab population. Many of the remaining nomads have given up full-time subsistence pastoralism to become village agriculturists or stock breeders, or to find employment with oil companies or other employers in the towns and cities.

BEDOUINS

Called Badawi (plural Badw) in Arabic, the Bedouin (Beduin) are an Arabic-speaking nomadic people of the Middle Eastern deserts, especially of Arabia, Iraq, Syria, and Jordan.

Although they constitute only a small part of the total population of the Middle East, they inhabit or utilize a large part of the land area. Most of them are animal herders who migrate into the desert during the rainy winter season and move back toward the cultivated land in the dry summer months. Although the Bedouin, as a matter of caste, traditionally despise agricultural work and other manual labour, many of them have become sedentary as a result of political and economic developments, especially since World War II. In the 1950s, Saudi Arabia and Syria nationalized Bedouin range lands, and Jordan severely limited goat grazing. Conflicts over land use between Bedouin herders on the one hand and settled agriculturists on the other have increased since then.

A Bedouin family and its camels near Najaf, Iraq. Mario Tama/Getty Images

The traditional Bedouin can be classified according to the animal species that are the basis of their livelihood. First in prestige are the camel nomads, who occupy huge territories and are organized into large tribes in the Sahara, Syrian, and Arabian deserts. Beneath them in rank are the sheep and goat nomads, who stay mainly near the cultivated regions of Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. Cattle nomads are found chiefly in South Arabia and in The Sudan, where they are called Baqqarah (Baggara).

Following World War I the Bedouin tribes had to submit to the control of the governments of the countries in

which their wandering areas lay. The tribal character of Bedouin society continued, however, as did the patriarchal order in their extended, patrilineal, endogamous, and polygynous families. Among the Arabic-speaking tribes, the head of the family, as well as of each successively larger social unit making up the tribal structure, is called sheikh; the sheikh is assisted by an informal council of male elders.

BENGALIS

Bengalis form the majority population of Bengal, the region of northeastern South Asia that generally corresponds to the country of Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal. They speak dialects of Bangla—as they call the Bengali language—which belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family.

The Bengali are of diverse origins, having emerged from the confluence of various communities that entered the region over the course of many centuries. The earliest inhabitants of the region are believed to have been the Vedda from Sri Lanka. Later the Vedda were joined by Mediterranean peoples who spoke Indo-European languages. In the 8th century peoples of Arab, Turkish, and Persian descent began to enter the area. Eventually all these groups merged to become the people now known as Bengali.

Most of the Bengali in Bangladesh are practitioners of Sunni Islam, while the majority of the Bengali in West Bengal follow Hinduism. This religious difference traces largely to the 13th century, when Muslim forces invaded the region from the northwest. At the time, the population of Bengal comprised a mixture of Hindus

and Buddhists. Following the arrival of the Muslims, most of the residents of eastern Bengal converted to Islam, while Hinduism became the predominant religion in the western region.

In the early 21st century the majority of the Bengali population remained rural, in both Bangladesh and West Bengal. Whether Hindu or Muslim, they engage in a broad spectrum of artistic activity. Both Hindus and Muslims share the Hindustani classical music and dance tradition, while they also display a strong penchant for nonclassical popular forms. The Bengali of Bangladesh, for instance, created many unique popular music genres, such as *baul* and *marfati*, that have remained without true equivalents outside the country. Meanwhile, the Bengali of West Bengal produced internationally acclaimed films, most of which have a prominent musical component.

HAUSA

The Hausa people live chiefly in northwestern Nigeria and adjacent southern Niger. They constitute the largest ethnic group in the area, which also contains another large group, the Fulani, perhaps one-half of whom are settled among the Hausa as a ruling class, having adopted the Hausa language and culture. The language belongs to the Chadic group of the Afro-Asiatic family and is infused with many Arabic words as a result of Islamic influence, which spread during the latter part of the 14th century from the kingdom of Mali, profoundly influencing Hausa belief and customs. A small minority of Hausa, known as Maguzawa, or Bunjawa, remained pagan.

Hausa society was, and to a large extent continues to be, politically organized on a feudal basis. The ruler (emir) of one of the several Hausa states is surrounded by a

number of titled officeholders who hold villages as fiefs, from which their agents collect taxes. Administration is aided by an extensive bureaucracy, often utilizing records written in Arabic.

The Hausa economy has rested on the intensive cultivation of sorghum, corn (maize), millet, and many other crops grown on rotation principles and utilizing the manure of Fulani cattle. Agricultural activity has yielded considerably more than subsistence, permitting the Hausa to practice such craft specializations as thatching, leather-working, weaving, and silversmithing. The range of craft products is large, and trading is extensive, particularly in regularly held markets in the larger towns. Hausa are also famous as long-distance traders and local vendors of Hausa-made leather goods as well as tourist items.

The Hausa have settled in cities (of pre-European origins, such as Kano), towns, and hamlets; but the great majority of the population is rural. A typical farm household consists of two or more men and their families grouped in a mud- or stalk-walled enclosure of some 1,000 square feet (93 square metres) containing small round or rectangular huts with thatched roofs and a larger rectangular hut in the centre for the headman of the compound.

JAVANESE

The Javanese form the largest ethnic group on the island of Java, Indon. Their language is spoken by more than 71 million people. The Javanese are Muslim, though Hindu traditions of an earlier era are still evident.

Traditional Javanese social organization varied in structure from relatively egalitarian villages to the highly stratified society of the cities, with their complex court

life. These differences found linguistic expression in styles of speech that vary according to status differences between the persons speaking: an informal style, a polite style, an extremely polite style, and several others. These styles are more elaborate in Javanese than in other languages of the area and are used habitually.

KURDS

The Kurds are an ethnic and linguistic group living in the Taurus Mountains of eastern Anatolia, the Zagros Mountains of western Iran, portions of northern Iraq, Syria, and Armenia, and adjacent areas. Most of the Kurds live in contiguous areas of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey—a somewhat loosely defined geographic region generally referred to as Kurdistan ("Land of the Kurds"). The name has different connotations in Iran and Iraq, which officially recognize internal entities by this name: Iran's northwestern province of Kordestan and Iraq's Kurdish autonomous region. A sizable, noncontiguous Kurdish population also exists in the Khorasan region, situated in Iran's northeast.

The Kurdish language is related to Persian and Pashto. The Kurds are thought to number from 20 million to 25 million, but sources for this information differ widely because of differing criteria of ethnicity, religion, and language; statistics may also be manipulated for political purposes.

The traditional Kurdish way of life was nomadic, revolving around sheep and goat herding throughout the Mesopotamian plains and the highlands of Turkey and Iran. Most Kurds practiced only marginal agriculture. The enforcement of national boundaries beginning after World War I (1914–18) impeded the seasonal migrations of the

flocks, forcing most of the Kurds to abandon their traditional ways for village life and settled farming; others entered nontraditional employment.

The prehistory of the Kurds is poorly known, but their ancestors seem to have inhabited the same upland region for millennia. The records of the early empires of Mesopotamia contain frequent references to mountain tribes with names resembling "Kurd." The name Kurd can be dated with certainty to the time of the tribes' conversion to Islam in the 7th century CE. Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, and among them are many who practice Sufism and other mystical sects.

The principal unit in traditional Kurdish society was the tribe, typically led by a sheikh or an aga, whose rule was firm. Tribal identification and the sheikh's authority are still felt, though to a lesser degree, in the large urban areas. Detribalization proceeded intermittently as Kurdish culture became urbanized and was nominally assimilated into several nations.

Kurdish nationalism came about through the conjunction of a variety of factors, including the British introduction of the concept of private property, the partition of regions of Kurdish settlement by modern neighbouring states, and the influence of British, U.S., and Soviet interests in the Persian Gulf region. These factors and others combined with the flowering of a nationalist movement among a very small minority of urban, intellectual Kurds.

MALAYS

The Malay are an ethnic group of the Malay Peninsula and portions of adjacent islands of Southeast Asia. They were once probably a people of coastal Borneo who expanded into Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula as a

result of their trading and seafaring way of life. That this expansion occurred only in the last 1,500 years or so is indicated by the fact that the languages of the Malay group are all still very much alike, though very divergent from the languages of other peoples of Sumatra, Borneo, and other neighbouring lands. In the early 21st century the Malay constituted more than half of the population of Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia) and more than one-eighth of the population of East Malaysia (Sarawak and Sabah).

The Malay culture has been strongly influenced by that of other peoples, including the Siamese, Javanese, and Sumatran. The influence of Hindu India was historically very great, and the Malay were largely Hinduized before they were converted to Islam in the 15th century. The population of the Malay Peninsula today includes large numbers of Indians and Chinese.

The Malay religion is Islam of the school of Shafiʿi. Muslim religious holidays are observed. Some Hindu ritual survives, as in the second part of the marriage ceremony and in various ceremonies of state. In rural areas the Malay have also preserved some of their old beliefs in spirits of the soil and jungle, which are partly Hindu in origin; they often have recourse to medicine men or shamans for the treatment of disease.

PERSIANS

The predominant ethnic group of Iran (formerly known as Persia) and a significant minority community in western Afghanistan are Persian. Although of diverse ancestry, the Persian people are united by their language, Persian (Farsi), which belongs to the Indo-Iranian group of the Indo-European language family.

The name Persia derives from Parsa, the name of the Indo-European nomadic people who migrated into southern Iran—to an area then called Persis—about 1000 BCE. As the Parsa expanded their sphere of political influence, the entire Iranian plateau became known to outsiders (such as the ancient Greeks) as Persia; its various peoples were designated (collectively) the Persians. Subsequent rulers—including Alexander the Great—fostered cultural consolidation.

The vast majority of Persians practice Shiʿite Islam. (This form of Islam is one of the two largest branches of the Islam faith, the other one being Sunni Islam.) Before the Muslim conquest of Persia in the 7th century CE, most Persians followed Zoroastrianism, based on the teachings of the ancient prophet Zoroaster (Zarathustra), who lived during the first half of the 1st millennium BCE. In 21st-century Iran there remain a small number of Zoroastrians; larger groups now live in South Asia. In addition to the Zoroastrians, Persian adherents of the Baha'i faith (which originated in Iran) constitute a tiny minority of the population, their religion having been strongly discouraged by the Muslim government.

The Persian population is engaged in a broad array of occupations, in both urban and rural settings. The traditional handwoven cloth and carpet industries for which they are known have remained strong, despite competition from mechanized textile mills. Persian villages often pride themselves on the unique designs and high quality of their carpets, most of which display the typical geometric figures and floral designs of Muslim visual art. Products of the weaving industry are both used locally and exported. The Persians are known for their intricately inlaid metalwork as well as for their legacy of extraordinary architecture. Finely decorated pre-Islamic

structures still stand in several ancient cities, as do spectacular mosques and shrines from the Muslim era. A number of these buildings—including those at Persepolis and Chogha Zanbil—and their surroundings have been designated UNESCO World Heritage sites.

SUNDANESE

The Sundanese are one of the three principal ethnic groups of the island of Java, Indonesia. Estimated to number about 25,850,000 in the early 21st century, they are a highland people of western Java, distinguished from the Javanese mainly by their language and their strict adherence to the Muslim faith.

Historically they were first recorded under the Indo-Javanese Brahmanical states (8th century CE) and subsequently accepted the Mahayana Buddhism adopted by the Shailendra kings. Muslim trade influenced them to accept Islam in the 16th century, the people of Bantam being especially fervent; however, animistic and Hindu influences survive.

The Sundanese village is ruled by a headman and a council of elders. The single-family houses are made of wood or bamboo, raised on piling. Rice culture and ironworking, as well as marriage, birth, and death ceremonies, conform closely to the Javanese pattern, though often mixed with elements of Hindu origin.

UIGHURS

The Uighurs are Turkic-speaking people of interior Asia who live for the most part in northwestern China, in the Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang; a small number live in the Central Asian republics. There were nearly 9

Muhammad Ababakari (left), a Uighur of Xinjiang, makes a musical instrument. Musical instruments represent one of the popular handicrafts of Uighurs in this region of China. Frederic J. Brown/AFP/Getty Images

million Uighurs in China and about 300,000 in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan in the early 21st century.

The Uighur language is part of the Turkic group of Altaic languages, and the Uighur are among the oldest Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia. They are mentioned in Chinese records from the 3rd century CE. The group first rose to prominence in the 8th century, when they established a kingdom along the Orhon River in what is now north-central Mongolia. In 840 this state was overrun by the Kyrgyz, however, and the Uighurs migrated southwestward to the area around the Tien

(Tian) Shan ("Celestial Mountains"). There they formed another independent kingdom in the Turfan region, but this was overthrown by the expanding Mongols in the 13th century.

The Uighur are, in the main, a sedentary, village-dwelling people, who live in the network of oases formed in the valleys and lower slopes of the Tien Shan, Pamirs, and related mountain systems. The region is one of the most arid in the world; hence, for centuries they have practiced irrigation to conserve their water supply for agriculture.

The chief Uighur cities are Ürümqi, the capital of Xinjiang, and Kashgar (Kashi), an ancient centre of trade near the Russian-Chinese border. The group's social organization is centred on the village. Most Uighurs, especially those of Xinjiang, are Sunni Muslims.

UZBEKS

The Uzbeks of Central Asia live chiefly in Uzbekistan, but also in other parts of Central Asia and in Afghanistan. They speak either of two dialects of Uzbek, a Turkic language. More than 16 million Uzbeks live in Uzbekistan, 2,000,000 in Afghanistan, 1,380,000 in Tajikistan, 570,000 in Kyrgyzstan, and smaller numbers in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Xinjiang in China.

The Uzbek designation is thought to refer to Öz Beg (Uzbek), the Mongol khan under whom the Golden Horde attained its greatest power. The Uzbeks grew out of a mingling of ancient, settled Iranian populations with a variety of nomadic Mongol or Turkic tribes that invaded the region between the 11th and the 15th centuries. The former were ethnically similar to the Tajiks, and the latter included Kipchaks, Karluks, and Turks of Samarkand (relatively more Mongolized groups). A third element was

added with the invasion of Mongol nomadic tribes under the leadership of Muhammad Shaybani Khan in the early 16th century.

The great majority of Uzbeks are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi rite, a group noted for the acceptance of personal opinion (*ra'y*) in the absence of Muslim precedent. The Uzbeks, especially the urban Uzbeks, are considered to be the most religious Muslims of Central Asia; early marriages for young girls, bride-price, and religious marriages and burials are among the traditions still practiced. The Uzbeks are the least Russified of those Turkic peoples formerly ruled by the Soviet Union, and virtually all still claim Uzbek as their first language.

Chapter 2

Islamic Arts: Introduction and General Considerations

The phrase *Islamic arts* refers to the arts practiced by the vast populations of the Middle East and elsewhere that adopted the Islamic faith from the 7th century onward. These adherents of the faith have created such an immense variety of arts that it virtually defies any comprehensive definition. In this book the subject includes the arts created in pre-Islamic times by Arabs and other peoples in Asia Minor and North Africa who eventually adopted the Islamic faith. It focuses largely on literature, calligraphy, and architecture.

Representation of living beings is prohibited—not in the Qur'an but in the prophetic tradition of Islam. Thus, the centre of the Islamic artistic tradition lies in calligraphy, a distinguishing feature of this culture, in which the word as the medium of divine revelation plays such an important role. Representational art was found, however, in some early palaces and "at the doors of the bathhouses,"

according to later Persian poetry. After the 13th century a highly refined art of miniature developed, primarily in the non-Arab countries; it dwells, however, only rarely upon religious subjects. The typical expression of Muslim art is the arabesque, a style of decoration characterized by intertwining plants and abstract curvilinear motifs, both in its geometric and in its vegetabilic form—one leaf, one flower growing out of the other, without beginning and end and capable of almost innumerable variations—only gradually detected by the eye—that never lose their charm. An aversion to empty spaces distinguishes that art; neither the tile-covered walls of a mosque nor the rich imagery of a poem allows an unembellished area; and the decoration of a carpet can be extended almost without limit.

The centre of Islamic religion is the clean place for prayer, enlarged into the mosque, which comprises the community and all its needs. The essential structure is similar throughout the Muslim world. There are, of course, period and regional differences—large, wide court mosques of early times; court mosques, with big halls, of Iran and adjacent countries; central buildings with the wonderfully shaped domes of the Ottoman Empire. The implements, however, are the same: a niche (mihrab)—pointing to Mecca—made of wood, marble, mosaic, stone, and tiles; a small pulpit for the Friday sermon; minarets, locally differently shaped but always rising like the call to prayer (*adhan*) that is uttered from their tops; the wooden carved stands for the Qur'an, which is to be written in the most perfect form; sometimes highly artistic lamps (made in Syria and proverbially mentioned all over the Muslim world); perhaps bronze candlesticks, with inlaid ornaments; and rich variations of the prayer mats. If any decoration was needed, it was the words of God, beautifully written or carved in the walls or around the domes.

At first connected with the mosques and later independent of them are schools, mausoleums, rooms for the students, and cells for the religious masters.

The poetry of the Arabs consisted in the beginning of praise and satirical poems thought to be full of magic qualities. The strict rules of the outward form of the poems (monorhyme, complicated metre) even in pre-Islamic times led to a certain formalism and encouraged imitation.

Goethe's statement that the stories of *The Thousand and One Nights* have no goal in themselves shows his understanding of the character of Arabic belles lettres, contrasting them with the Islamic religion, which aims at "collecting and uniting people in order to achieve one high goal." Poets, on the other hand, rove around without any ethical purpose, according to the Qur'an. For many pious Muslims, poetry was something suspect, opposed to the divine law, especially since it sang mostly of forbidden wine and of free love. The combination of music and poetry, as practiced in court circles and among the mystics, has always aroused the wrath of the lawyer divines who wielded so much authority in Islamic communities. This opposition may partly explain why Islamic poetry and fine arts took refuge in a kind of unreal world, using fixed images that could be correctly interpreted only by those who were knowledgeable in the art.

The ambiguity of Persian poetry, which oscillates between the worldly, the divine, and often the political level, is typical of Islamic writings. Especially in Iran and the countries under its cultural influence, this kind of poetry formed the most important part of literature. Epic poetry of all kinds developed exclusively outside the Arabic-speaking countries; Western readers look in vain for an epical structure in such long poems (as in the case of the prose-romances of the Arabs) and find, instead, a rather aimless representation of facts and fictions. A similar

characteristic even conditions innumerable historical works in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, which, especially in classical times, contain much valuable information, put together without being shaped into texts that allow the historian or philosopher reach a comprehensive view. The first attempt at a philosophy of history, Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* ("Introduction"), in the 14th century, was rarely studied by his Arab compatriots.

The accumulation of large amounts of material, which is carefully organized up to the present, seems typical of all branches of Islamic scholarship, from theology to natural sciences. There are many minute observations and descriptions but rarely a full view of the whole process. Later, especially in the Persian, Turkish, and Indo-Muslim areas, a tendency to overstress the decorative elements of prose is evident; and the contents even of official chronicles are hidden behind a network of rhymed prose, which is difficult to disentangle.

This tendency is illustrated in all branches of Islamic art: the lack of "architectural" formation. Instead, there is a kind of carpet-like pattern; the Arabic and Persian poem is, in general, judged not as a closed unity but rather according to the perfection of its individual verses. Its main object is not to convey a deep personal feeling but to perfect to the utmost the traditional rules and inherited metaphors, to which a new image may sometimes be added; thus the personality of the poet becomes visible only through the minimal changes of expression and rhythm and the application of certain preferred metaphors, just as the personality of the miniature painter can be detected by a careful observation of details, of his way of colouring a rock or deepening the shade of a turban. The same holds true for the arabesques, which were developed according to a strict ritual to a mathematical pattern and were refined until they reached a perfection of

geometrical complicated figures, as in the dome of the Karatay Medrese in Konya (Turkey; 1251); it corresponds both to the most intricate lacelike Kufic inscriptions around this dome and to the poetical style of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, who wrote in that very place and during those years. His immortal mystical poems comprise thousands of variations on the central theme of love. Although such a perfect congruency of poetry and fine arts is not frequently found, the precept about Persian art that "its wings are too heavy with beauty" can also be applied to Persian poetry. Thus, the tile work of a Persian mosque, which combines different levels of arabesque work with different styles of writing, is reminiscent of the way Persian poetry combines at least two levels of reality. And a perfect harmony is reached in some of the miniature manuscripts of Iran, Muslim India, or Ottoman Turkey, which, in their lucid colours and fine details of execution, recall both the perfection of the calligraphy that surrounds them on delicate paper and the subtlety of the stories or poems that they accompany or illustrate.

Drama in the Western sense did not develop in the Islamic countries until the 19th century; and the art of the novel is a very recent development. There was no reason for drama: in the Muslim perception Allah is the only actor who can do whatever he pleases, whose will is inscrutable. Humans are, at best, puppets on a string, behind whose movement the hand of the play master is detectable to those with insight; neither is the problem of personal guilt and absolution posed as it is in the West, nor is a catharsis, or purging of emotion, needed through drama. The atomist theory, widely accepted in Islam since the 10th century, leaves no room for a "dramatic" movement; it teaches that God creates everything anew in every moment, and what is called a "law of nature" is nothing but God's custom, which he can interrupt whenever he pleases.

Chapter 3

The Mortar of Islamic Culture

Understanding the importance of the Arabic language in Islamic culture is central to understanding both in its literature and its visual arts. In the 7th and 8th centuries CE the Arab armies conquered for Islam territories stretching from the shores of the Atlantic to Sindh (now in Pakistan). Besides a religion, they brought to the conquered peoples a language both written and spoken. The Arabic language was a principal factor in uniting peoples who differed widely in ethnicity, language, and culture. In the early centuries of Islam, Arabic not only was the official language of administration but also was and has remained the language of religion and learning. The Arabic alphabet has been adapted to Muslim peoples' vernaculars just as the Latin alphabet has been adapted in the Christian-influenced West.

ARABIC LANGUAGE

Classified as a Southern-Central Semitic language, Arabic is spoken across a large area including North Africa, most of the Arabian Peninsula, and other parts of the Middle East.

Perhaps most significantly, Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and the religious language of all Muslims. Literary Arabic, usually called Classical Arabic, is essentially the form of the language found in the Qur'an, with some modifications necessary for its use in modern times; it is uniform throughout the Arab world. Colloquial Arabic includes numerous spoken dialects, some of which are mutually unintelligible. The chief dialect groups are those of Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa. With the exception of the dialect of Algeria, all Arabic dialects have been strongly influenced by the literary language.

An Arabic word is composed of two parts: (1) the root, which generally consists of three consonants and provides the basic lexical meaning of the word, and (2) the pattern, which consists of vowels and gives grammatical meaning to the word. Thus, the root /k-t-b/ combined with the pattern /-i-a-/ forms kitab "book," whereas the same root combined with the pattern /-a-i-/ forms katib, "one who writes" or "clerk." The language also makes use of prefixes and suffixes, which act as subject markers, pronouns, prepositions, and the definite article.

ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY

The Arabic script was evolved probably by the 6th century CE from Nabataean, a dialect of Aramaic current in northern Arabia. The earliest surviving examples of Arabic before Islam are inscriptions on stone.

Arabic is written from right to left and consists of 17 characters, which, with the addition of dots placed above or below some of them, provide the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet. Short vowels are not included in the alphabet, being indicated by signs placed above or below the consonant or long vowel that they follow. Certain characters

may be joined to their neighbours, others to the preceding one only, and others to the succeeding one only. When coupled to another, the form of the character undergoes certain changes.

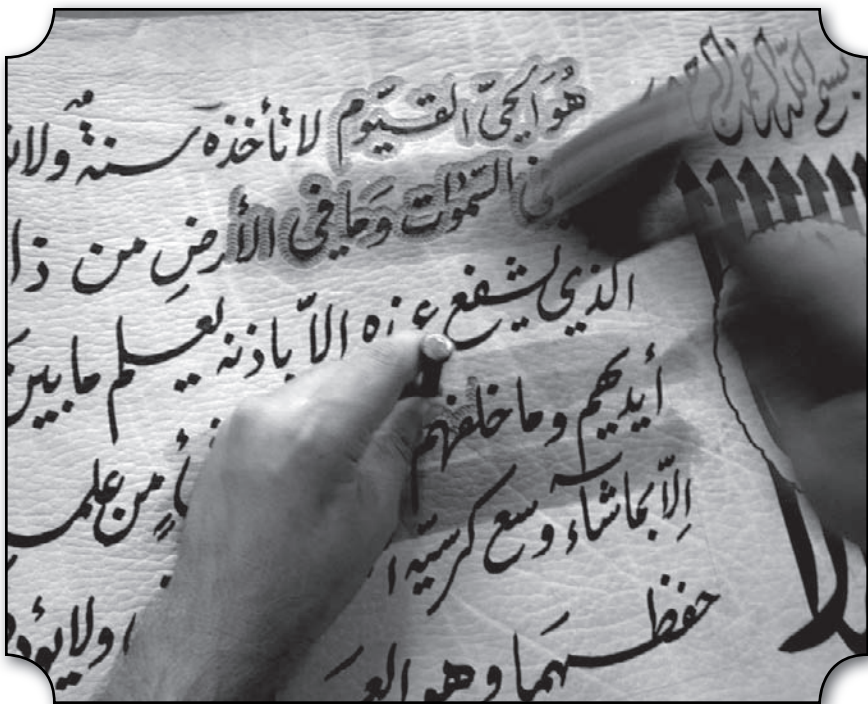
These features, as well as the fact that there are no capital forms of letters, give the Arabic script its particular character. A line of Arabic suggests an urgent progress of the characters from right to left. The nice balance between the vertical shafts above and the open curves below the middle register induces a sense of harmony. The peculiarity that certain letters cannot be joined to their neighbours provides articulation. For writing, the Arabic calligrapher employs a reed pen (*qalam*) with the working point cut on an angle. This feature produces a thick downstroke and a thin upstroke with an infinite gradation in between. The line traced by a skilled calligrapher is a true marvel of fluidity and sensitive inflection, communicating the very action of the master's hand.

Broadly speaking, there were two distinct scripts in the early centuries of Islam: cursive script and Kufic script. For everyday purposes a cursive script was employed: typical examples may be seen in the Arabic papyri from Egypt. Rapidly executed, the script does not appear to have been subject to formal and rigorous rules, and not all the surviving examples are the work of professional scribes. Kufic script, however, seems to have been developed for religious and official purposes. The name means "the script of Kufah," an Islamic city founded in Mesopotamia in 638 CE, but the actual connection between the city and the script is not clear. Kufic is a more or less square and angular script. Professional copyists employed a particular form for reproducing the earliest copies of the Qur'an that have survived. These are written on parchment and date from the 8th to the 10th

century. They are mostly of an oblong as opposed to codex (i.e., manuscript book) format. The writing is frequently large, especially in the early examples, so that there may be as few as three lines to a single page. The script can hardly be described as stiff and angular; rather, the implied pace is majestic and measured.

Kufic went out of general use about the 11th century, although it continued to be used as a decorative element contrasting with those scripts that superseded it. About 1000 CE a new script was established and came to be used for copying the Qur'an. This is the so-called *naskhi* script, which has remained perhaps the most popular script in the Arab world. It is a cursive script based on certain laws governing the proportions between the letters. The two names associated with its development are Ibn Muqlah and Ibn al-Bawwab, both of whom lived and worked in Mesopotamia.

Distinctive scripts were developed in particular regions. In Spain the *maghribi* ("western") script was evolved and became the standard script for Qur'ans in North Africa. Derived ultimately from Kufic, it is characterized by the exaggerated extension of horizontal elements and of the final open curves below the middle register.

Both Persia and Turkey made important contributions to calligraphy. In these countries the Arabic script was adopted for the vernacular. The Persian scribes invented the *ta'liq* script in the 13th century. The term *ta'liq* means "suspension" and aptly describes the tendency of each word to drop down from its preceding one. At the close of the same century, a famous calligrapher, Mir 'Ali of Tabriz, evolved *nasta'liq*, which, according to its name, is a combination of *naskhi* and *ta'liq*. Like *ta'liq*, this is a fluid and elegant script, and both were popularly used for copying Persian literary works.

Verses of the Qur'an are carved in calligraphy by an Iraqi on a piece of leather in Baghdad. This ancient profession has been handed from one generation to another for centuries. Ali Al-Saadi/AFP/Getty Images

A characteristic script developed in Ottoman Turkey was that used in the chancellery and known as *divani.* This script is highly mannered and rather difficult to read. Peculiar to Turkish calligraphy is the *tugra* (*tughra*), a kind of royal cipher based on the names and titles of the reigning sultan and worked into a very intricate and beautiful design. A distinctive *tugra* was created for each sultan and affixed to imperial decrees by a skilled calligrapher, the neshani.

There has always existed in the Islamic world a keen appreciation of fine handwriting, and, from the 16th century,

it became a practice to assemble in albums specimens of penmanship. Many of these assembled in Turkey, Persia, and India are preserved in museums and libraries. Calligraphy, too, has given rise to quite a considerable literature, such as manuals for professional scribes employed in chancelleries.

In its broadest sense, calligraphy also includes the Arabic scripts employed in materials other than parchment, papyrus, and paper. In religious buildings, verses from the Qur'an were inscribed on the walls for the edification of the faithful, whether carved in stone or stucco or executed in faience tiles. Religious invocations, dedications, and benedictory phrases were also introduced into the decoration of portable objects. Generally speaking, there is a close relationship between these and the scripts properly used on the conventional writing materials. It was often the practice for a skilled penman to design monumental inscriptions.

Chapter 4

Islamic Literatures

NATURE AND SCOPE

It would be almost impossible to make an exhaustive survey of Islamic literatures. There are so many works, of which hundreds of thousands are available only in manuscript, that even a very large team of scholars could scarcely master a single branch of the subject. Islamic literatures, moreover, exist over a vast geographical and linguistic area, for they were produced wherever the Muslims went, from their heartland in Arabia through the countries of the Middle East as far as Spain, North Africa, and, eventually, West Africa. Iran (Persia) is a major centre of Islam, along with the neighbouring areas that came under Persian influence, including Turkey and the Turkic-speaking areas of Central Asia. Many Indian vernaculars contain almost exclusively Islamic literary subjects; there is an Islamic content in the literature of Malaysia and in that of some East African languages, including Swahili. In many cases, however, the Islamic content proper is restricted to religious works—mystical treatises, books on Islamic law and

its implementation, historical works praising the heroic deeds and miraculous adventures of earlier Muslim rulers and saints, or devotional works in honour of the Prophet Muhammad.

The vast majority of Arabic writings are scholarly—the same, indeed, is true of the other languages under discussion. There are superb, historically important translations made by medieval scholars from Greek into Arabic; historical works, both general and particular; a range of religiously inspired works; books on grammar and on stylistics, on ethics and on philosophy. All have helped to shape the spirit of Islamic literature in general, and it is often difficult to draw a line between such works of "scholarship" and works of "literature" in the narrower sense of that term. Even a strictly theological commentary can bring about a deeper understanding of some problem of aesthetics. A work of history composed in florid and "artistic" language would certainly be regarded by its author as a work of art as well as of scholarship, whereas the grammarian would be equally sure that his keen insights into the structure of Arabic grammar were of the utmost importance in preserving that literary beauty in which Arabs and non-Arabs alike took pride.

In this treatment of Islamic literatures, however, the definition of "literature" is restricted to poetry and belles lettres, whether popular or courtly in inspiration. Other categories of writing will be dealt with briefly if these shed light on some peculiar problem of literature.

The Range of Islamic Literatures

Although Islamic literatures appear in such a wide range of languages and in so many different cultural environments, they are united by several commonalities, including their intellectual and religious underpinnings.

Arabic: Language of the Qur'an

The area of Islamic culture extends from western Africa to Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines; but its heartland is Arabia, and the prime importance and special authority of the Arabic language was to remain largely unquestioned after the spread of Islam. The Arabic poetry of pre-Islamic Arabia was regarded for centuries afterward as the standard model for all Islamic poetic achievement, and it directly influenced literary forms in many non-Arab literatures. The Qur'an, Islam's sacred scripture, was accepted by pious Muslims as God's uncreated word and was considered to be the highest manifestation of literary beauty. A whole literature defended its inimitability (*iʿjaz*) and unsurpassable beauty. Because it was God's own word, the Qur'an could not legitimately be translated into any other language; the study of at least some Arabic was therefore required of every Muslim. Arabic script was used by all those peoples who followed Islam, however much their own languages might differ in structure from Arabic. The Qur'an became the textbook of the Muslims' entire philosophy of life; theology, lexicography, geography, historiography, and mysticism all grew out of a deep study of its form and content; and even in the most secular works there can be found allusions to the holy book. Its imagery not unexpectedly permeates all Islamic poetry and prose.

Between the coming of Islam in the 7th century and the 11th, a great deal of poetry and prose in Arabic was produced. One branch of literature in Spain and North Africa matured in perfect harmony with the classical ideals of the Muslim East although its masters, during the 11th and 12th centuries, invented a few strophic forms unknown to classical Arabic poetry. In modern times, North African Muslim literature—mainly from Algeria

and Morocco—often uses French as a means of expression, since the tradition of Arabic writing was interrupted by the French occupation in the 19th century and has had to be built up afresh.

Persian

In 641 the Muslims entered Iran, and Persian influence on literary taste becomes apparent in Arabic literature from the mid-8th century onward. Many stories and tales were transmitted from, or through, Iran to the Arab world and often from there to western Europe. Soon Iran could boast a large literature in its own tongue. Persian literature was more varied in its forms and content than that written in classical Arabic. Although Persian adopted many of the formal rules of the Arabic language (including prosody and rhyme patterns), new genres, including epic poetry, were introduced from Iran. The lyric, elegant and supple, also reached its finest expression in the Persian language.

South Asian

Persian culture was by no means restricted to Iran itself. Northwestern India and what is now Pakistan became a centre of Islamic literature as early as the 11th century, with Delhi and Agra being of special importance. It was to remain a stronghold of Muslim cultural life, which soon also extended to the east (Bengal) and south (Deccan). Persian remained the official language of Muslim India until 1835, and not only its poetry but even its historiography was written in the high-flown manner that exemplified the Persian concept of fine style. Muslim India can further boast a fine heritage of Arabic poetry and prose (theological, philosophical, and mystical works).

At various times in its history the Indian subcontinent was ruled by princes of Turkish origin (indeed, the words *Turk* and *Muslim* became synonymous in some

Indian languages). The princes surrounded themselves with a military aristocracy of mainly Turkish extraction, and thus a few poetical and prose works in Turkish were written at some Indian courts. In various regions of the subcontinent an extremely pleasing folk literature has flourished throughout the ages: Sindhi in the lower Indus Valley, for example, and Punjabi in the Punjab are languages rich in an emotional poetry that uses popular metres and forms. At the Indo-Iranian border the oldest fragments of the powerful Pashto poetry date from the Middle Ages. The neighbouring Balochi poetry consists largely of ballads and religious folk songs. All the peoples in this area have interpreted Islamic mysticism in their own simple, touching imagery. In the east of the subcontinent, Bengali Muslims possess a large Islamic literary heritage, including religious epics from the 14th and 15th centuries and some lovely religious folk songs. The achievements of modern novelists and lyric poets from Bangladesh are impressive. To the north, where Islam came in the 14th century, a number of classical themes in Islamic lore were elaborated in Kashmiri lyric and epic poetry. To the south, an occasional piece of Islamic religious poetry can be found even in Tamil and Malayalam. Some fine Muslim short stories have been produced in modern Malayalam.

Urdu, now the chief literary language of Muslim India and Pakistan, borrowed heavily from Persian literature during its classical period in the 18th century. In many writings only the verbs are in Urdu, the rest consisting of Persian constructions and vocabulary; and the themes of traditional Urdu literature were often adapted from Persian. Modern Urdu prose, however, has freed itself almost completely from the past, whereas in poetry promising steps have been taken toward modernization of both forms and content.

Turkish

An elaborate "classical" style developed in Turkish after the 14th century, reaching its peak in the 17th. Like classical Urdu, it was heavily influenced by Persian in metrics and vocabulary. Many exponents of this "high" style came from the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, a rich and moving folk poetry in popular syllable-counting metres has always flourished among the Turkish population of Anatolia and Rumelia. The mystical songs of their poet Yunus Emre contributed greatly toward shaping this body of literature, which was preserved in the religious centres of the Sufi orders of Islam. From this folk tradition, as well as from Western literature, modern Turkish literature has derived a great deal of its inspiration.

Other Turkic Languages

A great deal of the Muslim literature of Central Asia is written in Turkic languages, which include Uzbek, Tatar, and Kyrgyz. Its main cultural centres (Samarkand, Bukhara, Fergana) became part of the Muslim empire after 711. Central Asia was an important centre of Islamic learning until the tsarist invasions in the 1870s, and the peoples of this region have produced a classical literature in Arabic. Many of the most famous Arabic and Persian scholars and poets writing in the heyday of Muslim influence were Central Asians by birth. Central Asians also possess a considerable literature of their own, consisting in large part of epics, folktales, and mystical "words of wisdom." The rules of prosody which hold for Arabic and Persian languages have been deliberately imposed on the Turkic languages on several occasions, notably by 'Ali Shir Nava'i, a master of Chagatai poetry and prose in Herat, and by Babur, the first Mughal emperor in India. Tajik literature is basically

Persian, both as it is written today in Tajikistan and as it existed in earlier forms, when it was indistinguishable from classical Persian. After the Russification of the country, and especially after the 1917 Revolution, a new literature emerged that was part and parcel of the former Soviet Union's literature. The same can be said, by and large, about the literatures of other Muslim Turkic peoples of Central Asia.

Other Languages

Smaller fragments of Islamic literature, in Chinese, are found in China (which has quite a large Muslim population) and in the Philippines. The literary traditions of Indonesia and of Malaysia, where the religion of Islam arrived long ago, are also worth noting. Historical and semimythical tales about Islamic heroes are a feature of the literature in these areas, a fact of immense interest to folklorists.

Contact with Islam and its "written" culture also helped to preserve national idioms in many regions. Often such idioms were enriched by Arabic vocabulary and Islamic concepts. The leaders of the Muslims in such areas in northern Nigeria, for example, preferred to write poetry and chronicles in Arabic, while using their mother tongue for more popular forms of literature. Of particular interest in this connection is Kurdish literature, which has preserved in an Iranian language several important, popular heterodox texts and epics.

Islamic Literatures and the West

Small fragments of Arabic literature have long been known in the West. There were cultural interrelations between Muslim Spain (which, like the Indus Valley, became part of

the Muslim empire after 711) and its Christian neighbours, and this meant that many philosophical and scientific works filtered through to western Europe. It is also likely that the poetry of Muslim Spain influenced the growth of certain forms of Spanish and French troubadour poetry and provided an element, however distorted, for medieval Western romances and heroic tales.

Investigation by Western scholars of the literatures that used to be termed "Oriental" did not begin until the 16th century in the Netherlands and England. First attempts toward an aesthetic understanding of Arabic and Persian poetry came even later: they were made by the British scholars of Fort William, Calcutta, and by German pre-Romantics of the late 18th century. In the first half of the 19th century the publication of numerous translations of Arabic and Persian poetry, especially into German, began to interest some Europeans. The poetical translations from Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit made by the German scholar and poet Friedrich Rückert can scarcely be surpassed, either in accuracy or in poetical mastery. Hafez became well known in German-speaking countries, thanks to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's enchanting poems *West-östlicher Divan* (1819; "The Parliament of East and West"), a collection that was the first response to Persian poetry and the first aesthetic appreciation of the character of this poetry by an acknowledged giant of European literature.

EXTERNAL CHARACTERISTICS

In order to understand and enjoy Islamic literature, one must study its external characteristics most carefully. The literatures of the Islamic peoples are "intellectual"; in neither poetry nor prose are there many examples of subjective

lyricism, as it is understood in the West. The principal genres, forms, and rules were inherited from pre-Islamic Arabic poetry but were substantially elaborated afterward, especially by the Persians.

Rhyme and Metre

Arabic poetry is built upon the principle of monorhyme, and the single rhyme, usually consisting in one letter, is employed throughout every poem, long or short. The structure of Arabic permits such monorhymes to be achieved with comparative ease. The Persians and their imitators often extended the rhyming part over two or more syllables (*radif*) or groups of words, which are repeated after the dominant rhyming consonant. The metres are quantitative, counting long and short syllables (*ʿarud*). Classical Arabic has 16 basic metres in five groupings; they can undergo certain variations, but the poet is not allowed to change the metre in the course of his poem. Syllable-counting metres, as well as strophic forms, are used in popular, or "low," poetry; only in post-classical Arabic were some strophic forms introduced into "high" poetry. Many modern Islamic poets, from Pakistan to Turkey and North Africa, have discarded the classical system of prosody altogether. In part they have substituted verse forms imitating Western models such as strophic poems with or without rhyme; since about 1950 free verse has almost become the rule, although a certain tendency toward rhyming or to the use of alliterative quasi-rhymes can be observed.

Genres

The chief poetic genres, as they emerged according to traditional rules, are the *qasidah*, the *ghazal*, and the *qitʿah*; in

Iran and its adjacent countries there are, further, the *roba'i* and the *masnawi*.

Qasidah

The *qasidah* (literally "purpose poem"), a genre whose form was invented by pre-Islamic Arabs, has from 20 to more than 100 verses and usually contains an account of the poet's journey. In the classic pattern, the parts followed a fixed sequence, beginning with a love-poem prologue (*nasib*), followed by a description of the journey itself, and finally reaching its real goal by flattering the poet's patron, sharply attacking some adversaries of his tribe, or else indulging in measureless self-praise. Everywhere in the Muslim world the *qasidah* became the characteristic form for panegyric. It could serve for religious purposes as well: solemn praise of God, eulogies of the Prophet, and songs of praise and lament for the martyr heroes of Shi'ite Islam were all expressed in this form. Later, the introductory part of the *qasidah* often was taken up by a description of nature or given over to some words of wisdom; or the poet took the opportunity to demonstrate his skill in handling extravagant language and to show off his learning. Such exhibitions were made all the more difficult because, though it varied according to the rank of the person to whom it was addressed, the vocabulary of each type of *qasidah* was controlled by rigid conventions.

Ghazal

The *ghazal* possibly originated as an independent elaboration of the *qasidah*'s introductory section, and it usually embodies a love poem. Ideally, its length varies between five and 12 verses. Its diction is light and graceful, its effect comparable to that of chamber music, whereas the *qasidah*-writer employs, so to speak, the full orchestral resources.

Qit'ah

Monorhyme is used in both the *qasidah* and *ghazal*. But while these two forms begin with two rhyming hemistiches (half-lines of a verse), in the *qit'ah* ("section") the first hemistich does not rhyme, and the effect is as though the poem had been "cut out" of a longer one (hence its name). The *qit'ah* is a less serious literary form that was used to deal with aspects of everyday life; it served mainly for occasional poems, satire, jokes, word games, and chronograms.

Roba'i

The form of the *roba'i*, which is a quatrain in fixed metre with a rhyme scheme of *a a b a*, seems to go back to pre-Islamic Persian poetical tradition. It has supplied the Persian poets with a flexible vehicle for ingenious aphorisms and similarly concise expressions of thought for religious, erotic, or skeptical purposes. The peoples who came under Persian cultural influence happily adopted this form.

Masnawi

Epic poetry was unknown to the Arabs, who were averse to fiction, whether it was expressed in poetry or in prose. The development of epic poetry was thus hindered, just as was the creation of novels or short stories. Nevertheless, *masnawi*—which means literally "the doubled one," or rhyming couplet, and by extension a poem consisting of a series of such couplets—became a favourite poetical form of the Persians and those cultures they influenced. The *masnawi* enabled the poet to develop the thread of a tale through thousands of verses. Yet even in such poetry, only a restricted number of metres was employed, and no metre allowed more than 11 syllables in a hemistich. Metre and

diction were prescribed in accordance with the topic; a didactic *masnawi* required a style and metre different from a heroic or romantic one. The *masnawi* usually begins with a praise of God, and this strikes the keynote of the poem.

Maqamah

The most typical expression of the Arabic—and Islamic—spirit in prose is the *maqamah* "gathering, assembly", which tells basically simple stories in an extremely and marvelously complicated style (abounding in word plays, logographs, double entendre, and the like) and which comes closest to the Western concept of the short story.

The versatility and erudition of the classical *maqamah* authors is dazzling, but the fables and parables that, during the first centuries of Islam, had been told in a comparatively easy flowing style, later became subject to a growing trend toward artificiality, as did almost every other literary genre, including expository prose. Persian historiographers and Turkish biographers, Indo-Muslim writers on mysticism and even on science all indulged in a style in which rhyme and rhetoric often completely obscured the meaning. It is only since the late 19th century that a matter-of-fact style has slowly become acceptable in literary circles; the influence of translations from European languages, the role of journalism, and the growing pride in a pure language freed from the cobwebs of the past worked together to make Islamic languages more pliable and less artificial.

Imagery

In all forms of poetry and in most types of prose, writers shared a common fund of imagery that was gradually refined and enlarged in the course of time. The main source of imagery was the Qur'an, its figures and utterances often

divested of their sacred significance. Thus, the beautiful Joseph (sura 12) is a fitting symbol for the handsome beloved; the nightingale may sing the psalms of David (sura 21:79 *a.o*); the rose sits on Solomon's wind-borne throne (sura 21:81 *a.o*), and its opening petals can be compared to Joseph's shirt rent by Potiphar's wife (sura 12:25 ff.), its scent to that of Joseph's shirt, which cured blind Jacob (sura 12:94). The tulip reminds the poet of the burning bush before which Moses stood (sura 20:9 ff.), and the coy beloved refuses the lover's demands by answering, like God to Moses, "Thou shalt not see me" (sura 7:143); but her (or his) kiss gives the dying lover new life, like the breath of Jesus (sura 3:49). Classical Persian poetry often mentions knights and kings from Iran's history alongside those from Arabic heroic tales. The cup of wine offered by the "old man of the Magians" is comparable to the miraculous cup owned by the Iranian mythical king Jamshid or to Alexander's mirror, which showed the marvels of the world; the nightingale may sing "Zoroastrian tunes" when it contemplates the "fire temple of the rose." Central scenes from the great Persian *masnawi*s contributed to the imagery of later writers in Persian-, Turkish-, and Urdu-speaking areas. Social and political conditions are reflected in a favourite literary equation between the "beautiful and cruel beloved" and "the Turk": since in Iran and India the military caste was usually of Turkish origin, and since the Turk was always considered "white" and handsome, in literary imagery he stood as the "ruler of hearts." Minute arabesque-like descriptions of nature, particularly of garden scenes, are frequent: the rose and the nightingale have almost become substitutes for mythological figures. The versatile writer was expected to introduce elegant allusions to classical Arabic and Persian literature and to folklore and to know enough about astrology, alchemy, and medicine to use the relevant technical terms accurately. Images inspired by the pastimes of the

grandees—chess, polo, hunting, and the like—were as necessary for a good poem as were those referring to music, painting, and calligraphy. Similarly, allusions in poetic imagery to the Arabic letters—often thought to be endowed with mystical significance or magical properties—were very common in all Islamic literatures. The poet had to follow strict rules laid down by the masters of rhetoric, rigidly observing the harmonious selection of similes thought proper to any one given sphere (four allusions to Qur'anic figures, for example; or three garden images all given in a single verse).

Skills Required of the Writer

The writer was also expected to use puns and to play with words of two or more meanings. He might write verses that could provide an intelligible meaning even when read backward. He had to be able to handle chronograms, codes based on the numerical values of a phrase or verse, which, when understood, gave the date of some relevant event. Later writers sometimes supplied the date of a book's compilation by hiding in its title a chronogram, a sentence in which specific letters get reinterpreted as numerals and represent a particular date when they are decoded or rearranged. A favourite device in poetry was the "question and answer" form, employed in the whole poem, or only in chosen sections.

One was expected to show talent at both improvisation and elaboration on any theme if one wished to attract the interest of a generous patron. The poetry was judged according to the perfection of its individual verses. Only in rare cases was the poem appreciated as a whole: the lack of coherent argument in *ghazal* poetry, which often puzzles the Western reader, is in fact deliberate.

It would be idle to look for the sincere expression of personal emotion in Arabic, Turkish, or Persian poetry. The conventions are so rigid that the reader is allowed only a rare glimpse into the poet's feelings. Yet the great masters of poetry and rhetoric (who all have their favourite imagery, rhymes, and rhythmical patterns) will sometimes allow the patient reader a glimpse into their hearts by a slight rhythmical change or by a new way of expressing a conventional thought.

These are, of course, quite crude generalizations. Only in the 20th century was a complete break with classical ideals made—sincerity instead of imitation, political and social commitment instead of panegyric, realism instead of escapism: these are the characteristic features of modern literatures of the Muslim countries.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS: PRE-ISLAMIC LITERATURE

The first known poetic compositions of the Arabs are of such perfect beauty and, at the same time, are so conventionalized, that they raise the question as to how far back an actual poetic tradition does stretch. A great number of pre-Islamic poems, dating from the mid-6th century, were preserved by oral tradition. The seven most famous pieces are *al-Muʿallaqat* ("The Suspended Ones," known as *The Seven Odes*), and these are discussed more fully below. The term *muʿallaqat* is not fully understood: later legend asserts that the seven poems had been hung in the most important Arab religious sanctuary, the Kaʿbah in Mecca, because of their eloquence and beauty and had brought victory to their authors in the poetical contests traditionally held during the season of pilgrimage. Apart from these seven, quite a number of shorter poems were preserved by later

AL-KHANSA'

(d. after 630)

Tumadir bint 'Amr ibn al-Harith ibn al-Sharid, whose byname was al-Khansa' (meaning "The Snub-Nosed"), was one of the greatest Arab poets.

The deaths of two of her kinsmen—her brother Mu'awiyah and her half-brother Sakhr, both of whom had been tribal heads and had been killed in tribal raids sometime before the advent of Islam—threw al-Khansa' into deep mourning. Her elegies on these deaths and that of her father made her the most celebrated poet of her time. When her tribe as a group accepted Islam, she went with them to Medina to meet the Prophet Muhammad, but she persisted in wearing the pre-Islamic mourning dress as an act of devotion to her brothers. When her four sons were slain in the Battle of Qadisiyah (637), the caliph 'Umar is said to have written her a letter congratulating her on their heroism and assigned her a pension.

The collected poetry of al-Khansa', the *Diwan* (published in an English translation by Arthur Wormhoudt in 1973), reflects the pagan fatalism of the tribes of pre-Islamic Arabia. The poems are generally short and imbued with a strong and traditional sense of despair at the loss of life. The elegies of al-Khansa' were highly influential, especially among later elegists.

scholars. An independent genre in pre-Islamic poetry was the elegy, often composed by a woman, usually a deceased hero's sister. Some of these poems, especially those by al-Khansa' are notable for their compact expressiveness.

Poetry

The poet (called a *sha'ir*, a wizard endowed with magic powers) was thought to be inspired by a spirit (*jinn,*

shaytan). The poet defended the honour of his tribe and perpetuated its deeds. Religious expression was rare in pre-Islamic poetry. In the main it reflects the sense of fatalism that was probably needed if the harsh circumstances of Bedouin life in the desert were to be endured.

The most striking feature of pre-Islamic poetry is the uniformity and refinement of its language. Although the various tribes, constantly feuding with one another, all spoke their own dialects, they shared a common language for poetry whether they were Bedouins or inhabitants of the small capitals of al-Hirah and Ghassan (where the influence of Aramaic culture was also in evidence).

Arabic was even then a virile and expressive language, with dozens of synonyms for the horse, the camel, the lion, and so forth; and it possessed a rich stock of descriptive adjectives. Because of these features, it is difficult for foreigners and modern Arabs alike to appreciate fully the artistic qualities of early Arabic poetry. Imagery is precise, and descriptions of natural phenomena are detailed. The sense of universal applicability is lacking, however, and the comparatively simple literary techniques of simile and metaphor predominate. The imaginative power that was later to be the hallmark of Arabic poetry under Persian influence had not yet become evident.

The strikingly rich vocabulary of classical Arabic, as well as its sophisticated structure, is matched by highly elaborate metrical schemes, based on quantity. The rhythmical structures were analyzed by the grammarian Khalil of Basra, who distinguished 16 metres. Each was capable of variation by shortening the foot or part of it; but the basic structure was rigidly preserved. One and the same rhyme letter had to be maintained throughout the poem. (The rules of rhyming are detailed and very complicated but were followed quite strictly from the 6th to the early 20th centuries.)

As well as rules governing the outward form of poetry, a system of poetic imagery already existed by this early period. The sequence of a poem, moreover, followed a fixed pattern (such as that for the *qasidah*). Pre-Islamic poetry was not written down but recited; and therefore sound and rhythm played an important part in its formation, and the *rawi*s "reciters" were equally vital to its preservation. A *rawi* was associated with some famous bard and, having learned his master's techniques, might afterward become a poet himself. This kind of apprenticeship to a master whose poetic style was thus continued became a common practice in the Muslim world (especially in Muslim India) right up to the 19th century.

From pre-Islamic times the seven authors of *The Seven Odes*, already described, are usually singled out for special praise. Their poems and miscellaneous verses were collected during the 8th century and ever since have been the subject of numerous commentaries in the East. They have been studied in Europe since the early 19th century.

Especially notable is the poet Imru' al-Qays, of the tribe of Kindah, who was foremost both in time and in poetic merit. He was a master of love poetry; his frank descriptions of dalliance with his mistresses are considered so seductive that (as orthodox Puritanism claims) the Prophet Muhammad called him "the leader of poets on the way to Hell." His style is supple and picturesque. Of all classical Arabic poets he is probably the one who appeals most to modern taste. At the other extreme stands Zuhayr, praising the chiefs of the rival tribes of 'Abs and Dhubyan for ending a long feud. He is chiefly remembered for his serious *qasidah* in which, old, wise, and experienced, he meditates upon the terrible escalation of war.

Also exciting for their savagery and beauty are some poems by Ta'abbata Sharran and Shanfara, both outlaw warriors. Their verses reveal the wildness of Bedouin life,

with its ideals of bravery, revenge, and hospitality. Ta'abbata Sharran is the author of a widely translated "Song of Revenge" (for his uncle), composed in a short, sharp metre. Shanfara's *lamiyah* (literally "poem rhyming in l") vividly, succinctly, and with a wealth of detail tells of the experiences to be had from life in the desert. This latter poem has sometimes been considered a forgery, created by a learned grammarian.

Prose

While poetry forms the most important part of early Arabic literature and is an effective historical preservation of the Arabs' past glory, there is also a quantity of prose. Of special interest is the rhymed prose (*saj'*) peculiar to soothsayers, which developed into an important form of ornate prose writing in every Islamic country. The "literary" genre most typical of Bedouin life is the *musamarah*, or "nighttime conversation," in which the central subject is elaborated not by plot but by carrying the listener's mind from topic to topic through verbal associations. Thus, the language as language played a most important role. The *musamarah* form inspired the later *maqamah* literature.

Early Islamic Literature

With the coming of Islam the attitude of the Arabs toward poetry seems to have changed. The new Muslims, despite their long-standing admiration for powerful language, often shunned poetry as reminiscent of pagan ideals now overthrown. The Qur'an, in sura 26:225 ff., condemned the poets "who err in every valley, and say what they do not do. Only the perverse follow them!" The Qur'an, as the uncreated word of God, was now considered the supreme manifestation of literary beauty. It became the basis and

touchstone of almost every cultural and literary activity and attained a unique position in Arabic literature.

Age of the Caliphs

After the death of Muhammad in 632, the time of the "Four Righteous Caliphs" began. For the next 29 years, four different rulers would lead the Islamic world as it continued to expand and grow. It might be expected that a new and vigorous religion would stimulate a new religious literature to sing of its greatness and glory. This, however, was not the case. Only much later did poets claim that their work was the "heritage of prophecy" or draw upon a tradition that calls the tongues of the poets "the keys of the treasures beneath the Divine Throne." The old, traditional literary models were still faithfully followed: a famous ode by Kaʿb, the son of Zuhayr, is different from pre-Islamic poetry only insofar as it ends in praise of the Prophet, imploring his forgiveness, instead of eulogizing some Bedouin leader.

The desire to preserve words of wisdom is best reflected in the sayings attributed to ʿAli, the fourth caliph. These, however, were written down, in superbly concise diction, only in the 10th century under the title *Nahj al-balaghah* ("The Road of Eloquence"), a work that is a masterpiece of the finest Arabic prose and that has inspired numerous commentaries and poetical variations in the various Islamic languages.

Umayyad Dynasty

The time of the "Four Righteous Caliphs" ended with the assassination of the final caliph, ʿAli, in 661. With his death, Mu'awiyah, the governor of Syria and a member of a clan

called the Bana Umayyah took over, beginning the Umayyad dynasty. At that time, the centre of the Islamic world moved from the Arabian Peninsula to the sophisticated city of Damascus. The Umayyads very much enjoyed the pleasures of life in their residence in Damascus and in their luxurious castles in the Syrian desert. One of their last rulers, the profligate al-Walid ibn Yazid, has become famous not so much as a conqueror (although in 711 the Muslims reached the lower Indus basin, Transoxania, and Spain) but as a poet who excelled in frivolous love verses and poetry in praise of wine. He was fond of short, light metres to match his subjects and rejected the heavier metres preferred by *qasidah* writers. His verses convey a sense of ease and gracious living. Al-Walid was not, however, the first to attempt this kind of poetry: a remarkable poet from Mecca, ʿUmar ibn Abi Rabiʿah, had contributed in large measure to the separate development of the love poem (*ghazal*) from its subordinate place as the opening section of the *qasidah*. Gentle and charming, in attractive and lively rhythms, his poems sing of amorous adventures with the ladies who came to Mecca on pilgrimage. His light-hearted, melodious poems still appeal to modern readers.

In Medina, on the other hand, idealized love poetry was the vogue; its invention is attributed to Jamil of the tribe ʿUdhrah, "whose members die when they love." The names of some of these "martyrs of love," together with the names of their beloved, were preserved and eventually became proverbial expressions of the tremendous force of true love. Such was Qays, who went mad because of his passion for Layla and was afterward known as Majnun ("Demented One"). His story is cherished by later Persian, Turkish, and Urdu poets; as a symbol of complete surrender to the force of love, he is dear both to religious mystics and to secular poets.

Notwithstanding such new developments, the traditional *qasidah* form of poetry remained popular during the Umayyad period. Moreover, as the satirists of Iraq rose to fame, the *naqa'id* ("polemic poetry matches") between Jarir and al-Farazdaq excited and delighted tribesmen of the rival settlements of Basra and Kufah (places that later also became rival centres of philological and theological schools).

Prose literature was still restricted to religious writing. The traditions of the Prophet began to be compiled, and, after careful sifting, those regarded as trustworthy were preserved in six great collections during the late 9th century. Two of these—that of al-Bukhari and that of Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj—were considered second only to the Qur'an in religious importance. The first studies of religious law and legal problems, closely connected with the study of the Qur'an, also belong to that period.

The 'Abbasids

It was not until a new dynasty, the 'Abbasids, assumed power in 750 and settled in Baghdad, that the golden age of Arabic literature began. The influx of foreign elements added new colour to cultural and literary life. Muslims had become aware of and translated ancient Greek texts, and now Hellenistic thought and the influence of the ancient cultures of the Middle East, for example, contributed to the rapid intellectual growth of the Muslim community. Its members, seized with insatiable intellectual curiosity, began to adapt elements from all the earlier high cultures and to incorporate them into their own. They thus created the wonderful fabric of Islamic culture that was so much admired in the Middle Ages by western Europe. Indian and Iranian threads were also woven into this fabric, and a

ABU NUWAS

(b. c. 747–762, Ahvaz, Iran—d. c. 813–815, Baghdad)

An important poet of the early 'Abbasid period (750–835) was Abu Nuwas al-Hasan ibn Hani' al-Hakami.

Of mixed Arab and Persian heritage, Abu Nuwas (also spelled Nu'as), studied in Basra and al-Kufah, first under the poet Walibah ibn al-Hubab, later under Khalaf al-Ahmar. He also studied the Qur'an, Hadith (traditions relating to the life and utterances of the Prophet), and grammar and is said to have spent a year with the Bedouins in the desert to acquire their traditional purity of language.

Abu Nuwas's initial appearance at the 'Abbasid court in Baghdad met with little success; his alliance with the Barmakids, the 'Abbasid viziers, forced him to seek refuge in Egypt when the Barmakid dynasty collapsed. On his return to Baghdad, however, his panegyrics earned the favour of the caliphs Harun al-Rashid and al-Amin, and he enjoyed great success in the 'Abbasid court until his death.

The language of Abu Nuwas's formal odes (*qasidahs*) is grammatically sound and based on the old Arab traditions; his themes, however, are drawn from urban life, not the desert. His verse is laced with humour and irony, reflecting the genial yet cynical outlook of the poet, who spent much of his life in pursuit of pleasure. His witty and cynical verses are addressed mainly to handsome boys; best known are his scintillating drinking songs. His line "Accumulate as many sins as you can" seems to have been his motto; and compared with some of his more lascivious lines, even the most daring passages of pre-Islamic poetry sound chaste. Abu Nuwas had such an incomparable command over the language, however, that he came to be regarded as one of the greatest Arabic poets of all time. Nevertheless, orthodox Muslims would quote of him and of his imitators the Prophet's alleged saying that "poetry is what Satan has spit out," since he not only described subjects prohibited by religious law but praised them with carefree lightheartedness.

new sensitivity to beauty in the field of poetry and the fine arts was cultivated.

The classical Bedouin style was still predominant in literature and was the major preoccupation of grammarians. These men were, as the modern critic Sir Hamilton Gibb has emphasized, the true humanists of Islam. Their efforts helped to standardize "High Arabic," giving it an unchangeable structure once and for all. By now the inhabitants of the growing towns in Iraq and Syria were beginning to express their love, hatred, religious fervour, and frivolity in a style more appealing to their fellow townsmen. Poets no longer belonged exclusively to what had been the Bedouin aristocracy. Artisans and freed slaves, of non-Arab origin, were included among their number.

Abu Nuwas is perhaps the most outstanding of the 'Abbasid poets.

The "New" Style

The new approach to poetry that developed during the 9th century was first accorded scholarly discussion in the *Kitab al-badi'* ("Book of the Novel and Strange") by Ibn al-Mu'tazz, caliph for one day, who laid down rules for the use of metaphors, similes, and verbal puns. The ideal of these "modern" poets was the richest possible embellishment of verses by the use of tropes, brilliant figures of speech, and farfetched poetic conceits. Many later handbooks of poetics discussed these rules in minute detail, and eventually the increasing use of rhetorical devices no longer produced art but artificiality. (Ibn al-Mu'tazz was himself a fine poet whose descriptions of courtly life and nature are lovely; he even tried to compose a tiny epic poem, a genre otherwise unknown to the Arabs.) The "modern" poets, sensitive to colours, sounds, and shapes, also were fond of writing short poems on unlikely subjects: a well-bred hunting dog or an inkpot; delicious sweetmeats

or jaundice; the ascetic who constantly weeps when he remembers his sins; the luxurious garden parties of the rich; an elegy for a cat; or a description of a green ewer. Their amusing approach, however, was sooner or later bound to lead to mannered compositions. The growing use of colour images may be credited to the increasing Persian influence upon ʿAbbasid poetry; for the Persian poets were, as has been often observed, on the whole more disposed to visual than to acoustic imagery.

New attitudes toward love, too, were being gradually developed in poetry. Eventually, what was to become a classic theme, that of *hubb ʿudhri* ("ʿUdhrah love")—the lover would rather die than achieve union with his beloved—was expounded by the Zahiri theologian Ibn Da'ud in his poetic anthology *Kitab al-zahrah* ("Book of the Flower"). This theme was central to the *ghazal* poetry of the following centuries. Although at first completely secular, it was later taken over as a major concept in mystical love poetry. (The first examples of this adoption, in Iraq and Egypt, took place in Ibn Da'ud's lifetime.) The wish to die on the path that leads to the beloved became commonplace in Persian, Turkish, and Urdu poetry; and most romances in these languages end tragically. Ibn Da'ud's influence also spread to the western Islamic world. A century after his death, the theologian Ibn Hazm, drawing upon personal experiences, composed in Spain his famous work on "pure love" called *Tawq al-hamamah* (*The Ring of the Dove*). Its lucid prose, interspersed with poetry, has many times been translated into Western languages.

The conflict between the traditional ideals of poetry and the "modern" school of the early ʿAbbasid period also led to the growth of a literary criticism, the criteria of which were largely derived from the study of Greek philosophy.

In the mid-10th century a new cultural centre emerged at the small court of the Hamdanids in Aleppo. Here the

Central Asian scholar al-Farabi wrote his fundamental works on philosophy and musical theory. Here, too, for a while, lived Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi, who is in the mainstream of classical *qasidah* writers but who surpasses them all in the extravagance of what has been called his "reckless audacity of imagination." He combined some elements of Iraqi and Syrian stylistics with classical ingredients. His compositions—panegyrics of rulers and succinct verses (which are still quoted)—have never ceased to intoxicate the Arabs by their daring hyperbole, their marvelous sound effects, and their formal perfection.

Development of Literary Prose

During the 'Abbasid period, literary prose also began to develop. Ibn al-Muqaffa', of Persian origin, translated the fables of Bidpai into Arabic under the title *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. These fables provided Islamic culture with a seemingly inexhaustible treasure of tales and parables, which are to be found in different guises throughout the whole of Muslim literature. He also introduced into Arabic the fictitious chronicles of the Persian *Khwatay-namak* ("Book of Kings"). This was the source of a kind of pre-Islamic mythology that the literati preferred above the somewhat meagre historical accounts of the Arab pagan past otherwise available to them. These activities demanded a smooth prose style, and Ibn al-Muqaffa' has therefore rightly been regarded as the inaugurator of what is called "secretarial literature" (that produced by secretaries in the official chancelleries).

The most vigorous prose style was achieved by Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi, who portrayed the weaknesses of the two leading viziers, both notorious for their literary ambitions, in such a light that the very possession of a copy of his book was thought to bring bad luck. This work, like others by Tawhidi that have quite recently

been discovered, reveals the author's sagacity and striking eloquence.

Some time about 800 the Arabs had learned the art of papermaking from the Chinese. Henceforth, cheap writing material was available, and literary output was prodigious. In those years manuals of composition (*insha'*) were written elaborating the technique of secretarial correspondence, and they grew into an accepted genre in Arabic as well as in Persian and Turkish literature. The devices thought indispensable for elegance in modern poetry were applied to prose. The products were mannered, full of puns, verbal tricks, riddles, and the like. The new style, which was also to affect the historian's art in later times, makes a good deal of this post-classical Arabic prose look very different from the terse and direct expression characteristic of the early specimens. Rhymed prose, which at one time had been reserved for such religious occasions as the Friday sermons, was now regarded as an essential part of elegant style.

This rhetorical artistry found its most superb expression in the *maqamah*, a form invented by Badiʿ al-Zaman al-Hamadhani. Its master, however, was al-Hariri, postmaster (head of the intelligence service) at Basra and an accomplished writer on grammatical subjects. His 50 *maqamah*s, which tell the adventures of Abu Zayd al-Saruji, with a wealth of language and learning, come closer to the Western concept of short story than anything else in classical Arabic literature. They abound in verbal conceits, ambivalence, assonance, alliteration, palindromes; they change abruptly from earnest to frivolous, and from the crude to the most sublime.

Achievements in the Western Muslim World

The Arabic literature of Moorish Spain and of the whole Maghrib developed parallel with that of the eastern

countries but came to full flower somewhat later. Córdoba, the seat of the Umayyad rulers (by 756, the Umayyad dynasty had died out in other parts of the Muslim world, but Umayyad rulers would continue to rule Spain until 1031), was the centre of cultural life. Its wonderful mosque has inspired Muslim poets right up to the 20th century (such as Sir Muhammad Iqbal, whose Urdu ode, "The Mosque of Córdoba," was written in 1935). Moorish Spain was a favourite topic for reformist novelists of 19th-century Muslim India, who contrasted their own country's troubled state with the glory of classical Islamic civilization. Moorish Spain reached its cultural, political, and literary heyday under ʿAbd al-Rahman III (912–961). Literary stylistic changes, as noted in Iraq and Syria, spread to the west: there the old Bedouin style had always been rare and soon gave way to descriptive and love poetry. Ibn Hani' of Sevilla (Seville) has been praised as the Western counterpart of al-Mutanabbi, largely because of his eulogies of the Fatimid caliph al-Muʿizz, who at that time still resided in North Africa. The entertaining prose style of Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi in his *al-ʿIqd al-farid* ("The Unique Necklace") is similar to that of his elder contemporary Ibn Qutaybah, and his book in fact became more famous than that of his predecessor.

Philosophy: Averroës and Avicenna

Philosophy, medicine, and theology, all of which flourished in the ʿAbbasid east, were also of importance in the Maghrib; and from there strong influences reached medieval Europe. The influences often came through the mediation of the Jews, who, along with numerous Christians, were largely Arabized in their cultural and literary outlook. The eastern Muslim countries could boast of the first systematic writers in the field of philosophy, especially Avicenna (Ibn Sina, d. 1037). Avicenna's work in philosophy, science, and medicine was outstanding and

was appreciated as such in Europe. He also composed religious treatises and tales with a mystical slant. One of his romances was reworked by the Maghribi philosopher Ibn Tufayl in his book *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* ("Alive Son of Awake"), or *Philosophus Autodidactus* (the title of its first Latin translation, made in 1671). It is the story of a self-taught man who lived on a lonely island and who, in his maturity, attained the full knowledge taught by philosophers and prophets. This theme was elaborated often in later European literature.

The dominating figure in the kingdom of the Almohads, however, was the philosopher Averroës (Ibn Rushd, d. 1198), court physician of the Amazigh (Berber) kings in Marrakush (Marrakech) and famous as the great Arab commentator on Aristotle. The importance of his frequently misinterpreted philosophy in the formation of medieval Christian thought is well known. Arguably the greatest Islamic theosophist of all, Ibn al-ʿArabi was Spanish in origin and was educated in the Spanish tradition. His writings, in both poetry and prose, shaped large parts of Islamic thought during the following centuries. Much of the later literature of eastern Islam, particularly Persian and Indo-Persian mystical writings, indeed, can be understood only in the light of his teachings. Ibn al-ʿArabi's lyrics are typical of the *ghazal*, sweet and flowing. From the late 9th century, Arabic-speaking mystics had been composing verses often meant to be sung in their meetings. At first a purely religious vocabulary was employed, but soon the expressions began to oscillate between worldly and heavenly love. The ambiguity thus achieved eventually became a characteristic feature of Persian and Turkish lyrics.

Geographical Literature

The Maghrib also made a substantial contribution to geographical literature, a field eagerly cultivated by Arab

scholars since the 9th century. The Sicilian geographer al-Sharif al-Idrisi produced a famous map of the world and accompanied it with a detailed description in his *Kitab nuzhat al-mushtaq fi ikhtiraq al-afaq* ("The Delight of Him Who Wishes to Traverse the Regions of the World," 1154), which he dedicated to his patron, Roger II. The Spanish traveler Ibn Jubayr, while on pilgrimage to Mecca, kept notes of his experiences and adventures. The resulting book became a model for the later pilgrims' manuals that are found everywhere in the Muslim world. The Maghribi explorer Ibn Battutah described his extensive travels to East Asia, India, and the region of the Niger in a book filled with information about the cultural state of the Muslim world at that time. The value of his narrative is enhanced by the simple and pleasing style in which it is written.

Poetry

In the field of poetry, Spain, which produced a considerable number of masters in the established poetical forms, also began to popularize strophic poetry, possibly deriving from indigenous models. The *muwashshah* ("girdled") poem, written in the classical short metres and arranged in four- to six-line stanzas, was elaborated, enriched by internal rhymes, and, embodying some popular expressions in the poem's final section, soon achieved a standardized form. The theme is almost always love. Among the greatest lyric poets of Spain was Ibn Zaydun of Córdoba, who was of noble birth. Another strophic form developed in Spain is the songlike *zajal* "melody", interesting for its embodiment of dialect phrases and the use of occasional words from Romance languages. Its master was Ibn Quzman of Córdoba, whose lifestyle was similar to that of Western troubadours. His approach to life as expressed in these melodious poems,

together with their mixed idiom, suggests an interrelationship with the vernacular troubadour poetry of Spain and France.

Historiography: Ibn Khaldun

Any survey of western Muslim literary achievements would be incomplete if it did not mention the most profound historiographer of the Islamic world, the Tunisian Ibn Khaldun. History has been called the characteristic science of the Muslims because of the Qur'anic admonition to discover signs of the divine in the fate of past peoples. Islamic historiography has produced histories of the Muslim conquests, world histories, histories of dynasties, court annals, and biographical works classified by occupation—scholars, poets, and theologians. Ibn Khaldun, in the famous *Muqaddimah* (introduction to a projected general history, *Kitab al-'ibar*) sought to explain the basic factors in the historical development of the Islamic countries. His own experiences, gained on a variety of political missions in North Africa, proved useful in establishing general principles that he could apply to the manifestations of Islamic civilization. He created, in fact, the first "sociological" study of history, free from bias.

Decline of the Arabic Language

Ibn Khaldun, who had served in his youth as ambassador to Pedro I the Cruel, of Castile, and in his old age as emissary to Timur, died in Cairo. After the fall of Baghdad in 1258, this city had become the centre of Muslim learning. Historians there recorded every detail of the daily life and the policies of the Mamluk sultans; theologians and philologists worked under the patronage of Turkish and Circassian rulers who often did not speak a word of Arabic.

The amusing, semicolloquial style of the historian Ibn Iyas is an interesting example of the deterioration of the Arabic language. While classical Arabic was still the ideal of every literate person, it had become exclusively a "learned" language.

MIDDLE PERIOD: THE RISE OF PERSIAN AND TURKISH POETRY

The New Persian Style

During the 'Abbasid period (750-1258), the Persian influence upon the Arabic had grown considerably: at the same time, a distinct Modern Persian literature came into existence in northeastern Iran, where the house of the Samanids of Bukhara and Samarkand had revived the memory of Sasanian glories.

The first famous representative of this new literature was the poet Rudaki, of whose *qasidah*s only a few have survived. He also worked on a Persian version of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, however, and on a version of the *Sendbad-nameh*. Rudaki's poetry, modeled on the Arabic rules of prosody that without exception had been applied to Persian, already points ahead to many of the characteristic features of later Persian poetry. The imagery in particular is sophisticated, although when compared with the mannered writing of subsequent times his verse was considered sadly simple. From the 10th century onward, Persian poems were written at almost every court in the Iranian areas, sometimes in dialectical variants (for example, in Tabarestani dialect at the Zeyarid court). In many cases the poets were bilingual, excelling in both Arabic and Persian (a gift shared by many non-Arab writers up to the 19th century).

Influence of Mahmud of Ghazna

The first important centre of Persian literature existed at Ghazna (present-day Ghazni, Afg.), at the court of Mahmud of Ghazna and his successors, who eventually extended their empire to northwestern India. Himself an orthodox warrior, Mahmud in later love poetry was transformed into a symbol of "a slave of his slave" because of his love for a Turkmen officer, Ayaz. Under the Ghaznavids, lyric and epic poetry both developed, as did the panegyric. Classical Iranian topics became the themes of poetry, resulting in such diverse works as the love story of Vameq and 'Azra (possibly of Greek origin) and the *Shah-nameh* ("Book of Kings"). A number of gifted poets praised Mahmud, his successors, and his ministers. Among them was Farrokhi of Seistan, who was the author of a powerful elegy on Mahmud's death, one of the finest compositions of Persian court poetry.

Epic and Romance

The main literary achievement of the Ghaznavid period, however, was that of Ferdowsi. He compiled the inherited tales and legends about the Persian kings in one grand epic, the *Shah-nameh*, which contains between 35,000 and 60,000 verses in short rhyming couplets. It deals with the history of Iran from its beginnings—that is, from the "time" of the mythical kings—passing on to historical events, giving information about the acceptance of the Zoroastrian faith, Alexander's invasion, and, eventually, the conquest of the country by the Arabs. A large part of the work centres on tales of the hero Rostam. These stories are essentially part of a different culture, thus revealing something about the Indo-European sources of Iranian mythology. The struggle between Iran and Turan (the

Central Asian steppes from which new waves of nomadic conquerors distributed Iran's urban culture) forms the central theme of the book; and the importance of the legitimate succession of kings, who are endowed with royal charisma, is reflected throughout the composition. The poem contains very few Arabic words and is often considered the masterpiece of Persian national literature. Its episodes have been the inspiration of miniaturists since the 14th century.

Other epic poems, on a variety of subjects, were composed during the 11th century. The first example is Asadi's didactic *Garshasb-nameh* ("Book of Garshasb"), whose hero is very similar to Rostam. The tales of Alexander and his journeys through foreign lands were another favourite topic. Poetical romances were also being written at this time, but these were soon superseded by the great romantic epics of Nezami of Ganja, in Caucasia. The latter are known as the *Khamseh* ("Quintet") and, though the names of Vis or Vameq continued for some time to serve as symbols of the longing lover, it was the poetical work of Nezami that supplied subsequent writers with a rich store of images, similes, and stories to draw upon. The first work of his *Khamseh, Makhzan al-asrar* ("Treasury of Mysteries"), is didactic in intention; the subjects of the following three poems are traditional love stories. The first is the Arabic romance of Majnun, who went mad with love for Layla. Second is the Persian historical tale of Shirin, a Christian princess, loved by both the Sasanian ruler Khosrow II Parviz and the stonecutter Farhad. The third story, *Haft peykar* ("Seven Beauties"), deals with the adventures of Bahram Gur, a Sasanian prince, and seven princesses, each connected with one day of the week, one particular star, one colour, one perfume, and so on. The last part of the *Khamseh* is *Eskandar-nameh*, which relates the adventures of Alexander III the Great in Africa and Asia, as well as his discussions with the wise philosophers.

It thus follows the traditions about Alexander and his tutor, Aristotle, emphasizing the importance of a counselor-philosopher in the service of a mighty emperor. Nezami's ability to present a picture of life through highly refined language and a wholly apt choice of images is quite extraordinary. Human feelings, as he describes them, are fully believable; and his characters are drawn with a keen insight into human nature. Not surprisingly, Nezami's work inspired countless poets' imitations in different languages—including Turkish, Kurdish, and Urdu—while painters constantly illustrated his stories for centuries afterward.

Other Poetic Forms

In addition to epic poetry, the lesser forms, such as the *qasidah* and *ghazal*, developed during the 11th and 12th centuries. Many poets wrote at the courts of the Seljuqs and also at the Ghaznavid court in Lahore, where the poet Mas'ud-e Sa'd-e Salman composed a number of heartfelt *qasidah*s during his political imprisonment. They are outstanding examples of the category of *habsiyah* (prison poem), which usually reveals more of the author's personal feelings than other literary forms. Other famous examples of *habsiyah*s include those written by the Arab knight Abu Firas in a Byzantine prison.

The most complicated forms were mastered by poets of the very early period, especially Qatran, who was born near Tabriz (now in Iran) and died after 1072. Through their display of virtuosity for virtuosity's sake, his *qasidah*s reached the limits of artificiality. Anvari, whose patrons were the Seljuqs, is considered the most accomplished writer of panegyrics in the Persian tongue. His verses abound in learned allusions. His "Tears of Khorasan," mourning the passing of Seljuq glory, is among the best known of Persian *qasidah*s.

Scholarship: al-Biruni

The Ghaznavid and Seljuq periods produced first-rate scholars such as al-Biruni, who, writing in Arabic, investigated Hinduism and gave the first unprejudiced account of India—indeed, of any non-Islamic culture. He also wrote notable books on chronology and history. In his search for pure knowledge he is undoubtedly one of the greatest minds in Islamic history. Interest in philosophy is represented by Naser-e Khosrow, who acted for a time as a missionary for the Isma'ili branch of Shi'ite Islam. His book about his journey to Egypt, entitled *Safar-nameh*, is a pleasing example of simple, clearly expressed, early Persian prose. His poetical works in the main seek to combine ancient Greek wisdom and Islamic thought: the gnostic Isma'ili interpretation of Islam seemed, to him, an ideal vehicle for a renaissance of the basic Islamic truths.

Roba'iyat: Omar Khayyam

The work done in mathematics by early Arabic scholars and by al-Biruni was continued by Omar Khayyam, to whom the Seljuq empire in fact owes the reform of its calendar. But Omar has become famous in the West through the free adaptations by Edward FitzGerald of his *roba'iyat*. These quatrains have been translated into almost every known language and are largely responsible for colouring European ideas about Persian poetry. The authenticity of these verses has often been questioned. The quatrain is an easy form to use—many have been scribbled on Persian pottery of the 13th century—and the same verse has been attributed to many different authors. The latest research into the question of the *roba'iyat* has established that a certain number of the quatrains can, indeed, be traced back to the great scientist who condensed in them his feelings

and thoughts, his skepticism and love, in such an enthralling way. The imagery he uses, however, is entirely inherited; none of it is original.

The Mystical Poem

Whereas the mystical thought stemming from Iran had formerly been written in Arabic, writers from the 11th century onward turned to Persian. Along with works of pious edification and theoretical discussions, what was to be one of the most common types of Persian literature came into existence: the mystical poem. Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-Ansari of Herat, a prolific writer on religious topics in both Arabic and Persian, first popularized the literary "prayer," or mystical contemplation, written in Persian in rhyming prose interspersed with verses. Sana'i, at one time a court poet of the Ghaznavids, composed the first mystical epic, the didactic *Hadiqat al-haqiqat wa shari'at al-tariqah* ("The Garden of Truth and the Law of the Path"), which has some 10,000 verses. In this lengthy and rather dry poem, the pattern for all later mystical *masnawi*s is established: wisdom is embodied in stories and anecdotes; parables and proverbs are woven into the texture of the story, eventually leading back to the main subject, although the argument is without thread and the narration puzzling to follow. Among Sana'i's smaller *masnawi*s, *Sayr al-'ibad ila al-ma'ad* ("The Journey of the Servants to the Place of Return") deserves special mention. Its theme is the journey of the spirit through the spheres, a subject dear to the mystics and still employed in modern times as, for example, by Iqbal in his Persian *Javid-nameh* (1932). Sana'i's epic endeavours were continued by one of the most prolific writers in the Persian tongue, Farid al-Din 'Attar. He was a born storyteller, a fact that emerges from his lyrics but even more so from his works of edification. The most famous among his *masnawi*s is the *Manteq al-teyr* (*The*

Conference of the Birds), modeled after some Arabic allegories. It is the story of 30 birds, who, in search of their spiritual king, journey through seven valleys. The poem is full of tales, some of which have been translated even into the most remote Islamic languages. (The story of the pious Sheykh San'an, who fell in love with a Christian maiden, is found, for example, in Kashmiri.) 'Attar's symbolism of the soul-bird was perfectly in accord with the existing body of imagery beloved of Persian poetry, but it was he who added a scene in which the birds eventually realize their own identity with God (because they, being *si morgh*, or "30 birds," are identified with the mystical Semorgh, who represents God). Also notable are his *Elahi-nameh*, an allegory of a king and his six sons, and his profound *Mosibat-nameh* ("Book of Affliction"), which closes with its hero's being immersed in the ocean of his soul after wandering through the 40 stages of his search for God. The epic exteriorizes the mystic's experiences in the 40 days of seclusion.

Importance of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi

The most famous of the Persian mystical *masnawi*s is by Mawlana ("Our Lord") Jalal al-Din al-Rumi and is known simply as the *Masnavi-ye Ma'navi*. It comprises some 26,000 verses and is a complete—though quite disorganized—encyclopaedia of all the mystical thought, theories, and images known in the 13th century. It is regarded by most of the Persian-reading orders of Sufis as second in importance only to the Qur'an. Its translation into many Islamic languages and the countless commentaries written on it up to the present day indicate its importance in the formation of Islamic poetry and religious thought. Jalal al-Din, who hailed from Balkh and settled in Konya, the capital of the Rum, or Anatolian Seljuqs (and hence was surnamed "Rumi"), was also the author of love lyrics whose beauty surpasses even that of the tales in the *Masnavi*. Mystical love

The Mawlawiyah fraternity of Sufis, known as dancing (or whirling) dervishes, performs the order's ritual prayers while spinning on the right foot to the accompaniment of musical instruments. This fraternity was founded by the great mystical poet Rumi. Gali Tibbon/AFP/Getty Images

poetry had been written since the days of Sana'i, and theories of love had been explained in the most subtle prose and sensitive verses by the Sufis of the early 12th century. Yet Rumi's experience of mystical love for the wandering mystic, Shams al-Din of Tabriz, was so ardent and enraptured him to such an extent that he identified himself completely with Shams, going so far as to use the beloved's name as his own pen name. His dithyrambic lyrics, numbering more than 30,000 verses altogether, are not at all abstract or romantic. On the contrary, their vocabulary and imagery are taken directly from everyday life, so that they are vivid, fresh, and convincing. Often their rhythm invites the reader to partake in the mystical dance practiced by Rumi's

followers, the Mawlawiyah. His verses sometimes approach the form of popular folk poetry; indeed, Rumi is reputed to have written mostly under inspiration; and despite his remarkable poetical technique, the sincerity of his love and longing is never overshadowed, nor is his personality veiled. In these respects he is unique in Persian literature.

Zenith of Islamic Literature

During the 13th century, the Islamic lands were exposed, on the political plane, to the onslaught of the Mongols and the abolition of the ʿAbbasid caliphate, while vast areas were laid to waste. Yet this was in fact the period in which Islamic literatures reached their zenith. Apart from Rumi's superb poetry, written in the comparative safety of Konya (Turkey), there was also the work of the Egyptian Ibn al-Farid, who composed some magnificent, delicately written mystical poems in *qasidah* style, and that of Ibn al-ʿArabi, who composed love lyrics and numerous theosophical works that were to become standard. In Iran, one of the greatest literati, Mosleh al-Din Saʿdi, returned about 1256 to his birthplace, Shiraz, after years of journeying; his *Bustan* ("The Orchard") and *Golestan* ("Rose Garden") have been popular ever since. The *Bustan* is a didactic poem telling wise and uplifting moral tales, written in polished, easy-flowing style and a simple metre; the *Golestan*, completed one year later, in 1258, has been judged ". . . the finest flower that could blossom in a Sultan's garden" (Herder). Its eight chapters deal with different aspects of human life and behaviour. At first sight, its prose and poetical fragments appear to be simple and unassuming; but not a word could be changed without destroying the perfect harmony of the sound, imagery, and content. Saʿdi's *Golestan* is thus essential in discovering the nature of the finest Persian literary style.

The influence of mysticism, on the one hand, and of the elaborate Persian poetical tradition, on the other, are

apparent during the later decades of the 13th century, both in Anatolia and in Muslim India. The Persian mystic, Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi, a master of delightful love lyrics, lived for almost 25 years in Multan (in present-day Pakistan), where his lively *ghazal*s are still sung. His short treatises, in a mixture of poetry and prose (and written under Ibn al-'Arabi's influence), have been imitated often. While in Multan he may have met the young Amir Khosrow of Delhi, who was one of the most versatile authors to write in Persian (not only in India but in the entire realm of Persian culture). Amir Khosrow, son of a Turkish officer, but whose mother was Indian, is often styled, because of the sweetness of his speech, "the parrot of India." (In Persian, it should be noted, parrots are always "sugar-talking"; they are, moreover, connected with Paradise and are thought of as wise birds—thus models of the sweet-voiced sage.) Imitating Nezami's *Khamseh*, Khosrow introduced a novelistic strain into the *masnawi* by recounting certain events of his own time in poetical form, some parts of which are lyrics. His style of lyrical poetry has been described as "powdered"; and his *ghazal*s contain many of the elements that in the 16th and 17th centuries were to become characteristic of the "Indian" style. Khosrow's poetry surprises the reader in its use of unexpected forms and unusual images, complicated constructions and verbal plays, all handled fluently and presented in technically perfect language. His books on the art of letter writing prove his mastery of high-flown Persian prose. Khosrow's younger contemporary, Hasan of Delhi, is less well known and had a more simple style. He nevertheless surpassed Khosrow in warmth and charm.

Turkish Literature

As for the literary developments in Turkey about 1300, the mystical singer Yunus Emre is the first and most important

in a long line of popular poets. Yunus exercised a powerful influence on Turkish literature.

Influence of Yunus Emre

The Turkish people rightly claim Yunus as the founder of Turkish literature proper. His poetry is considered the chief pillar of poetry of the Bektashiyah Sufi order, and many poets of this and other orders have imitated his style (though without reaching the same level of poetic truth and human warmth). In the 16th century, Pir Sultan Abdal (executed c. 1560) is noted for a few poems of austere melancholy. He

YUNUS EMRE

(b. c. 1238, Turkey—d. c. 1320, Turkey)

Little is known about Yunus Emre's life, which he probably spent not far from the Sakarya River of Asia Minor. Though legend obscures the facts of his life, he is known to have been a Sufi (Islamic mystic) who sat for 40 years at the feet of his master, Tapduk Emre. Yunus Emre was well versed in mystical philosophy, especially that of the 13th-century poet and mystic Jalal al-Din al-Rumi. The first poet known to have caught something of Rumi's fervour, he drew heavily on the reservoir of imagery of the great Persian writing mystics. Like Rumi, Yunus Emre became a leading representative of mysticism in Anatolia but on a more popular level; his classical technique did not hinder him from introducing new images taken from everyday life in Anatolian villages. He wrote in a straightforward, almost austere style and mainly in the traditional syllabic metre of Anatolian folk poetry. His *ilahis* (hymns), which are devoted mainly to the themes of divine love and human destiny, are characterized by deep feeling and probably were written to be sung at the meetings of the Sufis in the centres of their orders. They are still loved by the Turks and memorized by their children.

was executed for collaboration with the Safavids, the arch-enemies of the Ottomans; and in this connection it is worth remembering that the founder of the Iranian Safavid dynasty, Shah Esma'il I, wrote Turkish poetry under the pen name Khata'i and is counted among the Bektashi poets. His verse had a decisive influence on later Turkish mystics and inspired the poets of the renaissance of Turkish national poetry after 1910.

Religious Poetry

Mystically tinged poetry has always been very popular in Turkey, both in cities and rural areas. The best loved religious poem of all was, and still is, Süleyman Çelebi's *Mevlûd*, a quite short *masnawi* in honour of the Prophet Muhammad's birth. This type of poetry has been known in the Islamic countries since at least the 12th century and was soon adopted wherever Islam spread. There are a great number of *mevlûd* written in Turkish, but it was Süleyman Çelebi's unpretentious description of the great religious event that captured the hearts of the Turks; and it is still sung on many occasions (on the anniversary of a death, for example). The poem makes an excellent introduction to an understanding of the deep love for the Prophet felt by the pious Muslim.

Persian Literature: 1300–1500

In the Iran of the Middle Ages, a vast number of poets flourished at the numerous courts. Not only professional poets but even the kings and princes contributed more or less successfully to the body of Persian poetry. Epics, panegyrics, and mystico-didactical poetry had all reached their finest hour by the end of the 13th century; the one genre to attain perfection slightly later was the *ghazal*, of which Mohammad Shams al-Din Hafez is the incontestable master.

Lyric Poetry: Mohammad Shams al-Din Hafez

Hafez lived in Shiraz; his pen name—"Who Knows the Qur'an by Heart"—indicates his wide religious education, but little is known about the details of his life. The same is true of many Persian lyrical poets, since their products rarely contain much trustworthy biographical material. Hafez's comparatively small collection of work—his *Divan* contains about 400 *ghazal*s—was soon acclaimed as the finest lyrical poetry ever written in Persian. The discussion of whether or not to interpret its wine and love songs on a mystical plane has continued for centuries. Yet this discussion seems sterile since Hafez, whose verbal images shine like jewels, is an outstanding exponent of the ambiguous and oscillating style that makes Persian poetry so attractive and so difficult to translate. The different levels of experience are all expressed through the same images and symbols: the beloved is always cruel, mysterious, and unattainable, whether a chaste virgin (a rare case in Persian poetry!), a professional courtesan, a handsome boy (as in most cases), God himself, or even a remote despot, the wisdom of whose schemes must never be questioned by his subjects. Since mystical interpretation of the world order had become almost second nature to Persians during the 13th century, the beloved human could effortlessly be regarded as God's manifestation; the rose became a symbol of highest divine beauty and glory; the nightingale represented the yearning and complaining soul; wine, cup, and cupbearer became the embodiment of enrapturing divine love. The poets' multicoloured images were not merely decorative embroidery but were a structural part of their thought. One must not expect Hafez (or any other poet) to unveil his personal feelings in a lyrical poem of experience. But no other Persian poet has used such complex imagery on so many different levels with such

harmonious and well-balanced lucidity as did Hafez. His true greatness lies in this rather than in the content of his poetry. It must be stressed again that, according to the traditional view, each verse of a *ghazal* should be unique, precious for its own sake, and that the apparent lack of logic behind the sequence of verses was considered a virtue rather than a defect. (It may help to think of the glass pieces in a kaleidoscope, which appear in different patterns from moment to moment, yet themselves form no logical pattern.) To what extent an "inner rhythm" and a "contrapuntal harmony" can be detected in Hafez's poetry is still a matter for discussion; but that he perfected the *ghazal* form is indisputable. Whether he is praised as a very human love poet, as an interpreter of esoteric lore, or, as has been recently suggested, as a political critic, his verses have a continuing appeal to all lovers of art and artistry.

Parodies of Classic Forms

Hafez's contemporary in Shiraz was the satirist 'Obeyd-e Zakani, noted for his obscene verses (even the most moralistic and mystical poets sometimes produced surprisingly coarse and licentious lines) and for his short *masnawi* called *Mush o-gorbeh* ("Mouse and Cat"), an amusing political satire. Since few new forms or means of expression were open to them, 'Obeyd and other poets began ridiculing the classic models of literature: thus, Boshaq composed odes and *ghazal*s exclusively on the subject of food.

Eclecticism of 'Abd al-Rahman Jami

The last great centre of Islamic art in the region of Iran was the Timurid court of Herat, where Dowlatshah composed his much-quoted biographical work on Persian poets. The leading figure in this circle was 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, who is sometimes considered the last and most

JAMI

(b. Nov. 7, 1414, district of Jam—d. Nov. 9, 1492, Herat, Timurid Afg.)

The Persian scholar, mystic, and poet Mowlana Nur al-Din ʿAbd al-Rahman ebn Ahmad, best known as Jami, is often regarded as the last great mystical poet of Iran.

Jami spent his life in Herat, except for two brief pilgrimages to Meshed (Iran) and the Hejaz. During his lifetime his fame as a scholar resulted in numerous offers of patronage by many of the contemporary Islamic rulers. He declined most of these offers, preferring the simple life of a mystic and scholar to that of a court poet. His work is notably devoid of panegyrics. His prose deals with a variety of subjects ranging from Qur'anic commentaries to treatises on Sufism (Islamic mysticism) and music. His interest in Sufiism—he was initiated into the Naqshbandiyah order—is clear from his famous biographies of the Sufi saints (which were an elaboration of a similar work by the 11th-century ʿAbd Allah al-Ansari). In imitation of Saʿdi, Jami also composed the *Baharestan* ("Orchard of Spring"), written in prose interspersed with verses. Perhaps the most famous is his mystical treatise *Lava'ih* (*Flashes of Light*), a clear and precise exposition of the Sufi doctrines of wahdat al-wujud "the existential unity of Being", together with a commentary on the experiences of other famous mystics.

Jami's most famous collection of poetry is a seven-part compendium entitled *Haft awrang* ("The Seven Thrones," or "Ursa Major"). Although this collection is modeled on the works of the 13th-century romantic poet Nezami, it bears Jami's unmistakable mark of originality and intellectual vigour. He left no less than three large divans, which contain work of high quality and demonstrate his gift for inventing picturesque images. Although his work abounds in lavishly ornamented verses, his style on the whole lacks the perfect beauty of Hafez's lyrics and is already tending toward the heavier, more opaque "Indian" style. His influence on the work of later poets, especially in Ottoman Turkey, was very powerful.

comprehensive of the "seven masters" in Persian literature, since he was a master of every literary genre.

Prose Works: The "Mirror for Princes"

During the first five centuries of Modern Persian literary life, a multitude of prose works were written. Among them, the "Mirror for Princes" deserves special mention. This genre, introduced from Persian into Arabic as early as the 8th century, flourished once more in Iran during the late 11th century. One important example is the *Qabus-nameh* by the Zeyarid prince 'Unsur al-Ma'ali Kayka'us, which presents "a miscellany of Islamic culture in pre-Mongol times." At the same time, Nizam al-Mulk, the grand vizier of the Seljuqs, composed his *Seyasat-nameh* ("Book of Government"), a good introduction to the statesman's craft according to medieval Islamic standards. The *Seyasat-nameh* was heavily influenced by pre-Islamic Persian tradition.

Belles Lettres

Belles lettres proper found a fertile soil in Iran. The fables of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, for example, were retold several times in Persian. The "cyclic story" form (in which several unconnected tales are held together by a common framework or narrator device), inherited from India, became as popular in Iran as it had been in the Arabic-speaking countries. The *Sendbad-nameh* and the *Tuti-nameh* ("Parrot Book"), which is based on Indian tales, are both good examples of the popular method whereby a variety of instructive stories are skillfully strung together within a basic "running" story. Anecdotes were an important feature of the biographical literature that became popular in Iran and Muslim India. Biographies of the poets of a certain age or of a specified area were collected together. They provide the reader with few concrete facts about the

subjects concerned; but they abound in anecdotes, sayings, and verses attributed to the subjects, thus preserving material that otherwise might have been lost. One of the most remarkable works in this field is *Chahar maqaleh* ("Four Treatises") by Nezami-ye ʿAruzi, a writer from eastern Iran. Written about 1156, this little book is an excellent introduction to the ideals of Persian literature and its writers, discussing in detail what is required to make a perfect poet, giving a number of instances of the sort of poetic craftsmanship thought especially admirable, and allowing glimpses into the various arts in which the literary man was expected to excel.

This tendency toward "anecdotal" writing, which is also manifest in the work of a number of Arab historians, can be observed in the cosmographical books and in some of the historical books produced in medieval Iran. Hamdollah Mostowfi's cosmography, *Nuzhat al-qulub* ("Pleasure of the Hearts"), like many earlier works of this genre, underlined the mysterious aspects of the marvels of creation and was the most famous of several instructive collections of mixed folkloristic and scientific material. Early miniaturists, too, loved to illustrate the most unlikely tales and pieces of information given in such works. Historical writing proper had been begun by the Persians as early as the late 10th century, when Balʿami's abridged translation of al-Tabari's vast Arabic chronicle first acquainted them with this outstanding piece of early Arabic historical literature. The heyday of historiography in Iran, however, was the Il-Khanid period (mid-13th to mid-14th century). Iran was then ruled by the successors of Chinggis (Genghis) Khan, and scholars began to extend their interest back to the history of pre-Islamic Central Asia, whence the rulers had come. *Tarikh-e jehan-goshay* ("History of the World Conqueror") by ʿAta Malek-e

Joveyni and *Jami' al-tawarikh* ("Collector of Chronicles") by the physician and vizier Rashid al-Din (executed 1318) are both outstanding examples of histories filled with valuable information. Although the writing of history became a firmly established art in Iran and the adjacent Muslim countries, the facts were unfortunately all too often concealed in a bombastic style and a labyrinth of cumbersome, long-winded sentences. This development in Persian and Turkish prose is also reflected in the handbooks on style and letter writing that were written during the 14th and 15th centuries and afterward. They urged the practice of all the artificial tricks of rhetoric by this time considered essential for an elegant piece of prose.

Popular Literature

Islamic literatures, however, should not be thought to consist only of erudite and witty court poetry, of frivolous or melancholy love lyrics full of literary conceits, or of works deeply mystical in content. Such works are counterbalanced by a great quantity of popular literature, of which the most famous expression is *Alf laylah wa laylah* (*The Thousand and One Nights*, also known as *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*).

From pre-Islamic times the Arabs had recounted tales of the *ayyam al-'Arab* ("Days of the Arabs"), which were stories of their tribal wars, and had dwelt upon tales of the heroic deeds of certain of their brave warriors, such as 'Antarah. Modern research, however, suggests that this story in its present setting belongs to the period of the Crusades. The Egyptian queen Shajar al-Durr and the first brave Mamluk ruler, Baybars I, as well as the adventures of the Bedouin tribe Banu Hilai on its way to Tunisia, are all the subjects of lengthy popular tales.

THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS

The collection of stories known variously as *The Thousand and One Nights* (Arabic: *Alf laylah wa laylah*) and T*he Arabian Nights' Entertainment* is of uncertain date and authorship, and its tales of Aladdin, Ali Baba, and Sindbad the Sailor have almost become part of Western folklore.

As in much medieval European literature, the stories—fairy tales, romances, legends, fables, parables, anecdotes, and exotic or realistic adventures—are set within a frame story. Its scene is Central Asia, or "the islands or peninsulae of India and China," where King Shahryar, after discovering that during his absences his wife has been regularly unfaithful, kills her and those with whom she has betrayed him. Then, loathing all womankind, he marries and kills a new wife each day until no more candidates can be found. His vizier, however, has two daughters, Shahrazad (Scheherazade) and Dunyazad; and the elder, Shahrazad, having devised a scheme to save herself and others, insists that her father give her in marriage to the king. Each evening she tells a story, leaving it incomplete and promising to finish it the following night. The stories are so entertaining, and the king so eager to hear the end, that he puts off her execution from day to day and finally abandons his cruel plan.

The tales collected under this title come from different cultural areas; their nucleus is of Indian origin, first translated into Persian as *Hazar afsana* ("Thousand Tales") and then into Arabic. These fanciful fairy tales were later expanded with stories and anecdotes from Baghdad. Subsequently, some narratives—mainly from the lower strata of society—about rogues, tricksters, and vagabonds were added in Egypt. Independent collections of stories, such as those relating to Sindbad the Sailor, were also included. The tales' variety and geographical range of origin make single authorship unlikely. This view is supported by internal evidence—the style, mainly unstudied and unaffected, contains colloquialisms and even grammatical errors such as no professional Arabic writer would allow.

Robbers in a scene from "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," *one of the most well-known tales from* The Thousand and One Nights. Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

The first known reference to the *Nights* is a 9th-century fragment. It is next mentioned in 947 by al-Mas'udi in a discussion of legendary stories from Iran, India, and Greece, as the Persian *Hazar afsana*, "A Thousand Tales," "called by the people 'A Thousand Nights'." In 987 Ibn al-Nadim adds that Abu 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abdus al-Jashiyari began a collection of 1,000 popular Arabic, Iranian, Greek, and other tales but died (942) when only 480 were written.

It is clear that the expressions "A Thousand Tales" and "A Thousand and One . . ." were intended merely to indicate a large number and were taken literally only later, when stories were added to make up the number.

Since its first translation into French (1704), it has affected Western perceptions of the East, helping to foster Orientalism. By the 20th century, Western scholars had agreed that the *Nights* is a composite work consisting of popular stories originally transmitted orally and developed during several centuries, with

material added somewhat haphazardly at different periods and places. By the mid-20th century, six successive forms had been identified: two 8th-century Arabic translations of the Persian *Hazar afsana*, called *Alf khurafah* and *Alf laylah*; a 9th-century version based on *Alf laylah* but including other stories then current; the 10th-century work by al-Jahshiyari; a 12th-century collection, including Egyptian tales; and the final version, extending to the 16th century and consisting of the earlier material with the addition of stories of the Islamic Counter-Crusades and tales brought to the Middle East by the Mongols. Most of the tales best known in the West—primarily those of Aladdin, Ali Baba, and Sindbad—were much later additions to the original corpus. The entire collection reveals several aspects of Eastern folklore and affords, now and then, glimpses into the court life of the various dynasties.

Among the best known of the 19th-century translations into English is that of Sir Richard Burton, who used John Payne's little-known full English translation, 13 vol. (9 vol., 1882–84; 3 supplementary vol., 1884; vol. xiii, 1889), to produce his 6-volume unexpurgated *The Thousand Nights and a Night* (10 vol., 1885; 6 supplementary vol., 1886–88).

In Iran, many of the historical legends and myths had been borrowed and turned into high literature by Ferdowsi. Accounts of the glorious adventures of heroes from early Islamic times were afterward retold throughout Iran, India, and Turkey. Thus, the *Dastan-e Amir Hamzeh*, a story of Muhammad's uncle Hamzah ibn ʿAbd al-Muttalib, was slowly enlarged by the addition of more and more fantastic details. This form of *dastan*, as such literature is called, to some extent influenced the first attempts at novel writing in Muslim India during the 19th century. The epics of Köroglu are common to both Iranian and Turkish tradition. He was a noble warrior-robber who became one of the central figures in folk literature from Central Asia to Anatolia.

Some popular epics were composed in the late Middle Ages, having as their basis local traditions. One such epic had as its basis the Turco-Iranian legend of an 8th-century hero, Abu Muslim, another the Turkish tales of the knight Danishmend. Other epics, such as the traditional Turkish tale of Dede Korkut, were preserved by storytellers who improvised certain parts of their tales (which were noted only afterward). Also, the role of the Sufi orders and of the artisans' lodges in preserving and transmitting such semihistorical popular epics seems to have been considerable.

A truly popular poetry is everywhere to be found: lullabies sung by Balochi, Kurdish, and Igbo mothers have obvious similarities; workers sing little rhythmical poems to accompany their work, and nomads remember the adventures of their ancestors in their ballads. Such popular poems often contain dialect expressions, and the metres differ from the classical quantitative system. Some of these simple verses, such as a two-line *landay* in Pashto, are among the most graceful products of Islamic poetry. Many folksongs—lullabies, wedding songs, and dirges—have a distinct mystical flavour and reflect the simple Muslim's love for the Prophet and his trust in God's grace even under the most difficult circumstances. Irony and wit are features of the riddle poem, a favourite form among Muslims everywhere. Folk poets were also fond of humorous descriptions of imaginary disputations between two entities—they might compose dialogues between coffee and tobacco (Morocco), between big and small mosques (Yemen), between a cat and a dog, or between a boy and a girl. All the Iranian and Turkic languages, too, possess a rich heritage of popular poetry, which in many cases appeals more immediately to modern tastes than does the rather cerebral high literature of the urban and court cultures.

THE PERIOD FROM 1500 TO 1800

According to Persian tradition, the last classic author in literature was Jami, who died in 1492. In that year, Christopher Columbus discovered America, and the Christians reconquered Granada, the last Moorish stronghold of Spain. The beginning of the 16th century was as crucial in the history of the Muslim east as in that of the Western Hemisphere. In 1501, the young Esmaʿil founded the Safavid rule in Iran, and the Shiʿite persuasion of Islam was declared the state religion. At the same time, the kingdoms of the last Timurid rulers in Central Asia were overthrown by the Uzbeks, who, for a while, tried to continue the cultural tradition in both Persian and Turkic at their courts in Bukhara. In 1526, after long struggles, one member of the Timurid house, Babur, laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire in India. The Ottoman Turks, having expanded their empire (beginning in the late 13th century) from northwestern Anatolia into the Balkans, conquered crumbling Mamluk Egypt and adjacent countries, including the sacred places of Mecca and Medina in 1516–17. Thus, three main blocks emerged, and the two strongholds of Sunni Islam—Ottoman Turkey and Mughal India—were separated by Shiʿite Iran.

Decentralization of Islamic Literatures

Safavid Iran, as it happened, lost most of its artists and poets to the neighbouring countries: there were no great masters of poetry in Iran between the 16th and 18th centuries. And while the Persian Shah Esmaʿil wrote Turkish mystical verses, his contemporary and enemy, Sultan Selim I of Turkey, composed quite elegant Persian *ghazal*s. Babur, in turn, composed his autobiography in Eastern Turkic.

Babur's autobiography is a fascinating piece of Turkish prose and at the same time one of the comparatively rare examples of Islamic autobiographical literature. The classic example in this genre, however, was a lively Arabic autobiography by Usamah ibn Munqidh, which sheds much light upon the life and cultural background of a Syrian knight during the Crusades. Babur's book, however, gives a wonderful insight into the character of this intrepid conqueror. It reveals him as a master of concise, matter-of-fact prose, as a keen observer of daily life, full of pragmatic common sense, and also as a good judge of poetry. Babur even went so far as to write a treatise in Turkish about versification. Many of his descendants, both male and female, inherited his literary taste and talent for poetry; among them are remarkably good poets in Persian, Turkish, and Urdu, as well as accomplished authors of autobiographies (Jahangir) and letters (Aurangzeb). Among the nobility of India, the Turkish language remained in use until the 19th century.

In the Arab world, there was hardly a poet or original writer of note during the three centuries that followed the Ottoman conquest, apart from some theologians ('Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani, d. 1565; 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi, d. 1731) and grammarians. Yet Arabic still remained the language of theology and scholarship throughout the Muslim world; both Turkey and India could boast a large number of scholars who excelled in the sacred language.

New Importance of Indian Literature

India's share in the development of Arabic literature at this time was especially large. In addition to the quantity of theological work written in the language of the Qur'an, from the conquest of Sind in 711 right up until the 19th century, much philosophical and biographical literature in

Arabic was also being written in the subcontinent. Persian taste predominated in the northwest of India, but in the southern provinces there were long-standing commercial and cultural relationships with the Arabs, and an inclination toward preserving these intact. Thus, much poetry in conventional Arabic style was written during the 16th and 17th centuries, mainly in the kingdom of Golconda. There are even attempts at the epic form. A century after the heyday of Arabic in the Deccan, Azad Bilgrami composed numerous poetical and biographical works in Persian; but his chief fame was as the "Hassan of Hind," since he, like the Prophet Muhammad's protégé Hassan ibn Thabit, wrote some powerful Arabic panegyrics in honour of the Prophet of Islam. He even attempted to make a comparison of the characteristics of Arabic and Sanskrit poetry and tried to prove that India was the real homeland of Islam.

Indian Literature in Persian

Nevertheless, the main contribution of Muslim India to high literature was made in the Persian tongue. Persian had been the official language of the country for many centuries. The numerous annals and chronicles that were compiled during the 14th and 15th centuries, as well as the court poetry, had been composed exclusively in this language even by Hindus. During the Mughal period, its importance was enhanced both by Akbar's attempt to have the main works of classical Sanskrit literature translated into Persian and by the constant influx of poets from Iran who came seeking their fortune at the lavish tables of the Indian Muslim grandees. At this time what is known as the "Indian" style of Persian emerged. The translations from Sanskrit enriched the Persian vocabulary, and new stories of Indian origin added to the reservoir

of classical imagery. The poets, bound to the inherited genres of *masnawi, qasidah*, and *ghazal*, tried to outdo each other in the use of complex rhyme patterns and unfamiliar, often stiff, metres. It became fashionable to conceive a poem according to a given *zamin* ("ground"), in emulation of a classical model, and then to enrich it with newly invented tropes.

Yet some truly great poets are to be found even in this period. 'Urfi, who left Shiraz for India and died in his mid-30s in Lahore (1592), is without doubt one of the few genuine masters of Persian poetry, especially in his *qasidahs*. His verses pile up linguistic difficulties; yet their dark, glowing quality cannot fail to touch the hearts and minds even of critical modern readers. Among 17th-century Mughal court poets, the most outstanding is Abu Talib Kalim, who came from Hamadan. Abounding in descriptive passages of great virtuosity, his poignant and often pessimistic verses have become proverbial, thanks to their compact diction and fluent style. Also of some importance is Sa'ib of Tabriz, who spent only a few years in India before returning to Iran. Yet, of his immense poetical output (300,000 couplets), the great majority belongs to the stock-in-trade expression of the Persian-speaking world. With the long rule of Dara Shikoh's brother, the austere Aurangzeb, the heyday of both poetry and historical writing in Muslim India was over. The main vehicle of poetry now became Urdu, while mystical poetry flourished in Sindhi and Punjabi.

Pashto Poetry: Khushhal Khan Khatak

From the borderlands of the Persian-speaking zone, culturally under the Mughal rule, one man deserves special attention. The chief of the Pashtun tribe of Khatak, Khushhal Khan, rightly deserves to be called the "father"

of Pashto poetry, for he virtually created a literature of his own in his mother tongue. His skill in translating the sophisticated traditions of Persian literature into the not too highly developed idiom of the Pashtuns is astonishing. His lively lyric poems are his finest works, reflecting that passionate love of freedom for which he fought against the Mughals. The poems he wrote from prison in "hell-like hot India" are as dramatic as they are touching in their directness. Many members of his family took to poetry. During the 18th century original works, both religious and secular, were composed in Pashto, and the classics of Persian literature were translated into that language.

Ottoman Turkey

The development of literature in Ottoman Turkey is almost parallel with that of Iran and India. Yunus Emre had introduced a popular form of mystical poetry; yet the mainstream of secular and religious literature followed Persian models (although it took some time to establish the Persian rules of prosody because of the entirely different structure of the Turkish language). In the religious field, the vigour and boldness expressed in the poems of Nesimî (executed 1417) left their traces in the work of later poets, none of whom, however, reached his loftiness and grandeur of expression. The 14th- and 15th-century representatives of the classical style had displayed great charm in their literary compositions, their verses simple and pleasing. Sultan Cem (Jem; d. 1495), son of Mehmed the Conqueror, is an outstanding representative of their number. But soon the high-flown style of post-classical Persian was being imitated by Ottoman authors, rhetoric often being more important to them than poetical content. The

work of Bâkî (Baqi; d. 1600) is representative of the entire range of these Baroque products. Yet his breathtaking command of language is undeniable; it is brilliantly displayed in his elegy on Süleyman the Magnificent.

Poetry of Fuzûlî of Baghdad

Much greater than most of these minor poets, however, was a writer living outside the capital, Fuzûlî of Baghdad, who wrote in Arabic, Persian, and Azeri Turkish. Apart from his lyrics, his Turkish *masnawi* on the traditional subject of the lovers Majnun and Layla is admirable. From earliest times, Turkish poets had emulated the classical Persian romantic *masnawis*, sometimes surpassing their models in expressiveness. Fuzûlî's diction is taut, his command of imagery masterly. His style unfortunately defies poetical translation, and his complicated fabric of plain and inverted images, of hidden and overt allusions is well-nigh impossible for all but the initiated Muslim reader to disentangle. Fuzûlî, moreover, like his fellow poets, would blend Arabic, Persian, and Turkish constructions and words to make up a multifaceted unit. The same difficulty is found in Turkish prose literature of the same period. It is a major task to unravel the long trailing sentences of a writer such as Evliya Çelebî, who, in an account of his travels (*Seyahatnâme*), has left extremely valuable information about the cultural climate in different parts of the Ottoman Empire.

Later Developments

Growing interest in the Indo-Persian style, particularly in 'Urfi's *qasidah*s, led the 17th-century Ottoman poets to a new integrated style and precision of diction. An outstanding representative was Nef'î, whose bent for merciless satire made him dreaded in the capital and

eventually led to his assassination. At the start of the 18th century, a marked but short-lived movement in Turkish art known as the "Tulip Period" was the Ottoman counterpart of European Rococo. The musical poems and smooth *ghazal*s of Nedim reflect the manners and style of the slightly decadent, relaxed, and at times licentious high society of Istanbul and complement the miniatures of his contemporary Levnî. Good Turkish poetry is characterized by an easy grace, to be found even in such mystically tinged poems (thousands of which were written throughout the centuries) as those of Niyazî Misrî. The Mevlevî (Mawlawi) poet Gâlib Dede was already standing at the threshold of what can now be recognized as modern poetical expression in some of the lyrical parts of his *masnawi*, called *Hüsn u ask* ("Beauty and Love"), which brought fresh treatment to a well-worn subject of Iran's philosophical and secular literature. His work cannot be properly understood, however, without a thorough knowledge of mystical psychology, expressed in multivalent images.

Folk Poetry

One branch of literature, however, was totally neglected by the sophisticated inhabitants of the Ottoman capital. Nobody thought much of the folk poets who wandered through the forgotten villages of Anatolia singing in simple syllable-counting verses of love, longing, and separation. The poems of the mid-17th-century figure Karacaoglan, one of the few historically datable folk poets, give a vivid picture of village life, of the plight of girls and boys in remote Anatolian settlements. This kind of poetry was rediscovered only after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and then became an important influence on modern lyric poetry.

EUROPEAN AND COLONIAL INFLUENCES: EMERGENCE OF WESTERN FORMS

The Rise of Nationalism

For the Islamic countries, the 19th century marks the beginning of a new epoch. Napoleon's conquest of Egypt, as well as British colonialism, brought the Muslims into contact with a world whose technology was far in advance of their own. The West had experienced the ages of Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment, whereas the once-flourishing Muslim civilization had for a long while been at near stagnation despite its remarkable artistic achievements. The introduction of Muslim intellectuals to Western literature and scholarship—the Egyptian al-Tahtawi, for example, studied in France—ushered in a new literary era the chief characteristic of which was to be "more matter, less art." The literatures from this time onward are far less "Islamic" than those of the previous 1,000 years. The introduction of the printing press and the expansion of newspapers helped to shape a new literary style, more in line with the requirements of the modern times, when "the patron prince has been replaced by a middle-class reading public" (Badawi). Translations from Western languages provided writers with the model examples of genres previously unknown to them, including the novel, the short story, and dramatic literature. Of those authors whose books were translated, Guy de Maupassant, Sir Walter Scott, and Anton Chekhov were most influential in the development of the novel and the novella. Important also was the ideological platform derived from Leo Tolstoy (1829–1910), whose criticism

of Western Christianity was gratefully adopted by writers from Egypt to Muslim India. Western influences can further be observed in the gradual discarding of the time-hallowed static (and turgid) style of both poetry and prose, in the tendency toward simplification of diction, and in the adaptation of syntax and vocabulary to meet the technical demands of emulating Western models. Contact with the West also encouraged a tendency toward retrospection. Writers concentrated their attention on their own country and particular heritage, such as the "pharaoic myth" of Egypt, the Indo-European roots of Iran, and the Central Asian past of Turkey. In short, there was an emphasis on differentiation, inevitably leading to the rise of nationalism, instead of an emphasis on the unifying spirit and heritage of Islam.

Arab Literatures

Characteristically, therefore, given this situation, the heralds of Arab nationalism (as reflected in literature) were Christians. The historical novels of Jurji Zaydan, a Lebanese living in Egypt, made a deep impression on younger writers by glorifying the lion-hearted national heroes of past times. Henceforth, the historical novel was to be a favourite genre in all Islamic countries, including Muslim India. The inherited tradition of the heroic or romantic epic and folktale was blended with novelistic techniques learned from Sir Walter Scott. Two writers in the front rank of Arab intellectuals were Amir Shakib Arslan, of Druze origin, and Muhammed Kurd 'Ali, the founder of the Arab Academy of Damascus. Each made an important contribution to the education of modern historians and men of letters by encouraging a new degree of awareness. An inclination

toward Romanticism can be detected in prose writing but not, surprisingly, in poetry; thus, the Egyptian al-Manfaluti poured out his feelings in a number of novels that touch on Islamic as well as national issues.

Poetry

It is fair to say of this transition period that the poetry being written was not as interesting as the prose. The *qasidah*s of the "Prince of Poets," Ahmad Shawqi, are for the most part ornate imitations of classical models. Even the "Poet of the Nile," Muhammad Hafiz Ibrahim, who was more interested in the real problems of the day, was nonetheless content to follow conventional patterns. In his poems, Khalil Mutran attempted to achieve a unity of structure hitherto almost unknown; and he also adopted a more subjective approach to expressive lyricism. Thus, he can be said to have inaugurated an era of "Romantic" poetry, staunchly defended by those men of letters who had come under English rather than French influence. These included the poet and essayist Ibrahim al-Mazini and the prolific writer of poetry and prose 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad.

Prose

A major contribution to the development of modern prose in the Arabic language was made by a number of writers born between 1889 and 1902. One of them, Taha Husayn, became well known in the West as a literary critic who attacked the historical authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry and stressed the importance of Greek and Latin for the literatures of the modern Middle East. He is also the author of a successful novel called *The Tree of Misery*, but his best creative writing is in his autobiography, *Al-Ayyam* (*The Days*).

Taha Husayn's generation became more and more absorbed by the problems of the middle classes (to which most of them belonged), and this led them to realism in fiction. Some turned to fierce social criticism, depicting in their writings the dark side of everyday life in Egypt and elsewhere. The leading writer of this group is Mahmud Taymur, who wrote short stories, a genre developed in Arabic by a Lebanese Christian who settled in the United States, the noted and versatile poet Khalil Gibran (Jibran Khalil Jibran; d. 1931). Muhammad Husayn Haykal, a leading figure of Egyptian cultural and political life and the author of numerous historical studies, touched for the first time, in his novel *Zaynab* (1913), on the difficulties of Egyptian villagers. This subject quickly became fashionable afterward, although not all the writers had firsthand knowledge of the feelings and problems of the fellahin. The most fertile author of this group was al-'Aqqad, who tirelessly produced biographies, literary criticism, and romantic poetry. The Islamic reform movement led by Muhammad 'Abduh and his disciples, which centred on the journal *Al-Manar* ("The Lighthouse"), influenced Arabic prose style across the 20th century and was important in shaping the religious outlook of many authors writing in the 1920s and 1930s.

TAHA HUSAYN

(b. Nov. 14, 1889, Maghaghah, Egypt—d. Oct. 28, 1973, Cairo)

The outstanding figure of the modernist movement in Egyptian literature was Taha Husayn (also spelled Hussein, Husain) whose writings, in Arabic, include novels such as *The Tree of Misery*, stories, criticism, and social and political essays. Outside Egypt he is best known through his autobiography, *Al-Ayyam* (3 vol.,

1929–67; *The Days*), which describes in simple language the life of a blind Egyptian village boy and is the first modern Arab literary work to be acclaimed in the West.

Taha Husayn was blinded by an illness at age two. In 1902 he was sent to al-Azhar seminary in Cairo, the leading Sunni centre of higher Islamic education, but he was soon at odds with its predominantly conservative authorities. In 1908 he entered the newly opened secular University of Cairo, and in 1914 he was the first to obtain a doctorate there. Further study at the Sorbonne familiarized him with the culture of the West.

He returned to Egypt from France to become a professor of Arabic literature at the University of Cairo; his career there was frequently stormy, for his bold views enraged religious conservatives. His application of modern critical methods in *Fi al-shi'r al-jahili* (1926; "On Pre-Islamic Poetry") embroiled him in fierce polemics. In this book he contended that a great deal of the poetry reputed to be pre-Islamic had been forged by Muslims of a later date for various reasons, one being to give credence to Qur'anic myths. For this he was tried for apostasy, but he was not convicted. In another book, *Mustaqbal al-thaqafah fi Misr* (1938; *The Future of Culture in Egypt*), he expounds his belief that Egypt belongs by heritage to the same wider Mediterranean civilization that embraces Greece, Italy, and France; it advocates the assimilation of modern European culture.

The first part of *Al-Ayyam* appeared in 1929 (Eng. trans. *An Egyptian Childhood*) and the second in 1932 (Eng. trans. *The Stream of Days*). At age 78 he published a book of memoirs, *Mudhakkirat* (1967; Eng. trans. *A Passage to France*), considered a third volume of *Al-Ayyam*. In 1997 all three parts were published together in English translation as *The Days*.

The Diaspora

A considerable amount of Arabic literature was produced during the 20th century by numerous writers who settled in non-Islamic countries, especially the United States and Brazil. Most of these writers came from Christian

Lebanese families. A feeling of nostalgia often led them to form literary circles or launch magazines or newspapers. (The Arabic-language newspaper *Al-Huda* [or *Al-Hoda*, "The Guidance"] established in 1898, was published in New York City as *Al-Huda Al-jadidah* [*Al-Hoda Aljadidah*, or "The New Al-Hoda," or "The New Guidance"].) It was largely because of their work that the techniques of modern fiction and modern free verse entered Arabic literature and became a decisive factor in it.

One of the best-known authors in this group was Amin al-Rihani, whose descriptions of his journeys through the Arab world are informative and make agreeable reading. The fact that so many Lebanese emigrated led to the creation of a standard theme in Lebanese fiction: the emigrant who returns to his village. Iraqi modern literature is best represented by "the poet of freedom" Maʿruf al-Rusafi and Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi, whose satire "Rebellion in Hell" incurred the wrath of the traditionalists.

Turkish Literatures

The same changing attitude toward the function of literature and the same shift toward realism can be observed in Turkey. After 1839, Western ideas and forms were taken up by a group of modernists: Ziya Pasa, the translator of Jean-Jaques Rousseau's *Émile* (which became a popular textbook for 19th-century Muslim intellectuals), was among the first to write in a less traditional idiom and to complain in his poetry—just as Hali was to do in India a few years later—about the pitiable conditions of Muslims under the victorious Christians. Ziya Pasa, together with Sinasi and Namik Kemal, founded an influential Turkish journal, *Tasvir-i Efkâr* ("Picture of Ideas"). The essential theme of the articles, novels, poems, and dramas composed by these

authors is their fatherland (*vatan*), and they dared to advocate freedom of thought, democracy, and constitutionalism. Abdülhak Hâmid, though considerably their junior, shared in their activities. In 1879 he published his *Sahra* ("The Country"), a collection of 10 Turkish poems that were the first to be composed in Western verse forms and style. Later, he turned to weird and often morbid subject matter in his poetic dramas. He, like his colleagues, had to endure political restrictions on writing, imposed as part of the harsh measures taken by Sultan Abdülhamid II against the least sign of liberal thought. Influenced by his work, later writers aimed to simplify literary language: Ziya Gökalp laid the philosophical foundations of Turkish nationalism; and Mehmed Emin, a fisherman's son, sang artless Turkish verses of his pride in being a Turk, throwing out the heavy rhetorical ballast of Arabo-Persian prosody and instead turning to the language of the people, unadulterated by any foreign vocabulary. The stirrings of social criticism could be discerned after 1907. Mehmed Akif, in his masterly narrative poems, gave a vivid critical picture of conditions in Turkey before World War I. His powerful and dramatic style, though still expressed in traditional metres, is a testimony to his deep concern for the people's sorrows. It was he who composed the Turkish national anthem after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's victory in 1923, but soon afterward he left the country, disappointed with the religious policies of the Kemalists.

Atatürk's struggle for freedom also marks the real beginning of modern Turkish literature. The mainstream of novels, stories, and poems written during the 19th century had been replete with tears, world-weariness, and pessimism. But a postwar novel, *Atesten gömlek* ("The Fire Shirt"), written by a woman, Halide Edib, reflected the brave new self-awareness of the Turkish nation. Some successful short

stories about village life came from the pen of Ömer Seyfeddin. The most gifted interpreter and harshest critic of Turkey's social structure was Sabaheddin Ali, who was murdered on his flight to Bulgaria in 1948. His major theme was the tragedy of the lower classes, and his writing is characterized by the same merciless realism that was later to be a feature of stories by many left-wing writers throughout the Islamic world. The "great old man of Turkish prose," Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu, displayed profound psychological insight, whether ironically describing the lascivious life in a Bektashi centre or a stranger's tragedy in an Anatolian village. Most of the Turkish novelists of the 1920s and 1930s concentrated on the problems of becoming a modern nation, and in particular they reinterpreted the role of women in a liberated society.

Literary energies were set completely free when Atatürk introduced the Latin alphabet in 1928, hoping that his people would forget their Islamic past along with the Arabic letters. From this time onward, especially after the language reform that was meant to rediscover the pre-Islamic roots of the Turkish language, Turkish literature followed the pattern of Western literature in all major respects, though with local overtones. Poets experimented with new forms and new topics. They discovered the significance of the Anatolian village, neglected—even forgotten—during the Ottoman period. Freeing themselves from the traditional rules of Persian poetry, they adopted simpler forms from Europe. In some cases the skillful blending of inherited Ottoman grace and borrowed French lyricism produced outstandingly beautiful poems, such as those of Ahmed Hasim and of Yahya Kemal Beyatli, in which the twilight world of old Istanbul is mirrored in soft, evocative hues and melodious words. At the same time, the figure of Nazım Hikmet looms large in Turkish poetry. Expressing his progressive social attitude in truly poetical

form, he used free rhythmical patterns quite brilliantly to enrapture his readers; his style, as well as his powerful, unforgettable images, has deeply influenced not only Turkish but also progressive Urdu and Persian poetry from the 1930s onward.

Persian Literatures

In Iran, the situation to a certain extent resembled that in Turkey. While the last "classical" poet, Qa'ani, had been displaying the traditional glamorous artistry, the satirist Yaghma had been using popular and comprehensible language to make coarse criticisms of contemporary society. As in the other Islamic countries, a move toward simplicity is discernible during the last decades of the 19th century.

At the turn of the century, literature became for many younger writers an instrument of modernization and of revolution in the great sense of the word. No longer did they want to complain, in inherited fixed forms, of some boy whose face was like the moon. Instead, the feelings and situation of women were stated and interpreted. Their oppression, their problems, and their grievances are a major theme of literature in this transition period of the first decades of the 20th century. The "King of Poets," Bahar, who had been actively working before World War I for democracy, now devoted himself to a variety of cultural activities. But his poems, though highly classical in form, were of great influence; they dealt with contemporary events and appealed to a wide public.

One branch of modern Persian literature is closely connected with a group of Persian authors who lived in Berlin after World War I. There they established the Kaviani Press (named after a mythical blacksmith called Kaveh, who had saved the Iranian kingdom), and among

the poems they printed were several by 'Aref Qazvini, one of the first really modern writers. They also published the first short stories of Mohammad 'Ali Jamalzadeh, whose outspoken social criticism and complete break with the traditional inflated and pompous prose style inaugurated a new era of modern Persian prose. Many young writers adopted this new form, among them Sadeq Hedayat, whose stories—written entirely in a direct, everyday language with a purity of expression that was an artistic achievement—have been translated into many languages. They reflect the sufferings of living individuals; instead of dealing in literary clichés, they describe the distress and anxiety of a hopeless youth. The influence of Franz Kafka (1883–1924) (some of whose work Hedayat translated) is perceptible in his writing, and he has a tendency toward psychological probing shared by many Persian writers.

As in neighbouring countries, women played a considerable role in the development of modern Persian literature. The lyrics of Parvin E'tesami are regarded as near-classics, despite a trace of sentimentality in their sympathetic treatment of the poor. Some Persian writers whose left-wing political ideas brought them into conflict with the government left for what is now Tajikistan. Of these, the gifted poet Lahuti is their most important representative.

India: Urdu and Persian Literatures

Persian literature in the Indian subcontinent did not have such importance as in earlier centuries, for English replaced Persian as the official language in 1835. Nevertheless, there were some outstanding poets who excelled in Urdu. One of them was Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, the undisputed master of Urdu lyrics. He regarded himself, however, as the

leading authority on high Persian style and was an accomplished writer of Persian prose and poetry. But much more important was a later poet, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, who chose Persian to convey his message not only to the peoples of Muslim India but also to Afghans and Persians. Reinterpreting many of the old mystical ideas in the light of modern teachings, he taught the quiescent Muslim peoples self-awareness, urging them to develop their personalities to achieve true individualism. His first *masnawi*, called *Asrar-e khudi* (1915; "Secrets of the Self"), deeply shocked all those who enjoyed the dreamlike sweetness of most traditional Persian poetry. In the *Javid-nameh* (1932) he poetically elaborated the old topic of the "heavenly journey," discussing with the inhabitants of the spheres a variety of political, social, and religious problems. Iqbal's approach is unique. Although he used the conventional literary forms and leaned heavily on the inspiration of Rumi, he must be considered one of the select few poets of modern Islam who, because of their honesty and their capacity for expressing their message in memorable poetic form, appeal to many readers outside the Muslim world.

THE MODERN PERIOD

The modern period of Islamic literatures can be said to begin after World War II. The topics discussed before then still appeared, but outspoken social criticism became an even more important feature. Literature was no longer just a leisurely pastime for members of the upper classes. Writers born in the villages and from non-privileged classes began to win literary fame through their firsthand knowledge of social problems. Many writers started their careers as journalists, developing a literary style that retained the immediacy of journalistic observation.

Prose

In Egypt, a great change in literary preoccupations came about after 1952. The name of Naguib Mahfouz is of particular importance. He was at first a novelist mainly concerned with the lower middle classes (his outstanding work is a trilogy dealing with the life of a Cairo family); but afterward he turned to socially committed literature, using all the techniques of modern fiction—of which he is the undisputed master in Arabic. In 1988 he became the first Arabic writer to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. The works of Yusuf Idris deal first and foremost with the problems facing poor and destitute villagers. In Turkey, Yasar Kemal's village story *Ince Memed* won acclaim for its stark realism. During the middle decades of the 20th century and beyond, young left-wing writers in Iraq and Syria shared the critical and aggressive attitudes of their contemporaries in Turkey and Egypt and were involved in every political issue. Most of them responded to the works of Bertolt Brecht and Karl Marx. Freudian influence—often in its crudest form—could be detected in many modern short stories or novels in the Islamic countries. The existentialist philosophy gained many followers who tried to reflect its interpretation of life in their literary works. In fact, almost every current of modern Western philosophy and psychology, every artistic trend and attitude, was eagerly adopted at some point by young Arab, Turkish, or Persian writers during the period after World War II. The novel gradually became more popular in the Arab world as the 20th century wore on. Mahfouz was probably the single most important figure in the genre's widespread acceptance. From the Turkish tradition emerged Orhan Pamuk, who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006; his novels reached a worldwide audience.

ORHAN PAMUK

(b. June 7, 1952, Istanbul, Tur.)

The Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk is best known for works that probe Turkish identity and history.

Raised in a wealthy and Western-oriented family, Pamuk attended Robert College, an American school in Istanbul, and went on to study architecture at Istanbul Technical University. After three years he dropped out and devoted himself full-time to writing. In 1977 he graduated from the University of Istanbul with a degree in journalism. From 1985 to 1988 he lived in the United States and was a visiting scholar at Columbia University in New York and the University of Iowa.

Pamuk began writing seriously in 1974 and eight years later published his first novel, *Cevdet Bey ve ogullarɩ* ("Cevdet Bey and His Sons"), a sweeping history of an Istanbul family during and after the establishment of the Turkish republic. He first achieved international fame with *Beyaz kale* (1985; *The White Castle*), his third novel, which explores the nature of identity through the story of a learned young Italian captured and made a slave to a scholar in 17th-century Istanbul. His later novels, which were widely translated, include *Kara kitap* (1990; *The Black Book*), a dense depiction of Istanbul, and the mysteries *Yeni hayat* (1996; *The New Life*) and *Benim adim kirmizi* (1998; *My Name Is Red*). In *Kar* (2002; *Snow*), a Turkish poet living in exile in Germany faces the tensions between East and West when he travels to a poor town in a remote area of Turkey. *Istanbul: hatiralar ve sehir* (2004; *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, also published as *Istanbul: Memories of a City*) is a partly fictionalized memoir. *Masumiyet müzesi* (2008; "The Museum of Innocence") investigates the relationship between an older man and his second cousin. Thwarted in his attempts to marry her, the man begins to collect objects that she has touched. Pamuk replicated the titular museum in reality, using a house in Istanbul to display a range of items amassed while plotting the story.

Many of these works, often autobiographical and intricately plotted, show an understanding of traditional Turkish Islamic culture tempered by a belief that Turkey's future lies in the West. Pamuk drew criticism from some in Turkey for advocating the country's integration into Europe and its accession to the European Union. In 2005, after a Swiss newspaper published an interview in which he repeated claims that Turks had deliberately killed a million Armenians in 1915 and 30,000 Kurds more recently, Pamuk was charged with "denigrating Turkishness" and put on trial in Turkey in December. The charges, which produced international controversy, were later dropped.

Orhan Pamuk in 2005. Torsten Silz/AFP/Getty Images

Poetry

Arabic

The new attitudes that informed literature after World War II became even more conspicuous in poetry than in prose. Helped in part by French and English literary influences, Arabic poetry broke from classical tradition, a profound shift that also had its roots in efforts by nations across the Middle East to gain independence. The creation of the State of Israel also influenced the meaning and purpose of Arabic poetry. T.S. Eliot's poetry and criticism were influential in dethroning the Romanticism that many poets had adopted earlier, in the 1920s and '30s. One of the first and most important attempts at creating a modern Arabic poetic diction was made in the late 1940s by the Iraqi poet and critic Nazik al-Mala'ikah, whose poems, in free but rhyming verse, gave substance to the shadow of her melancholia.

Free rhythm and a colourful imagination distinguished the best poems of the younger Arabs: even when their poems do not succeed, their experimentation, their striving for sincerity, their burning quest for identity, their rebellion against social injustice can be readily perceived. Indeed, one of the most noticeable aspects of contemporary Arabic poetry written during the second half of the 20th century is its political engagement, evident in the poems of Palestinian writers such as Mahmud Darwish, whose verses once more prove the strength, expressiveness, and vitality of the Arabic language. The Iraqi modernist poet 'Abdul Wahhab al-Bayati combined political engagement with lyrical mysticism. Others, without withdrawing into a world of uncommitted dreams, managed to create in their poetry an atmosphere that broke up the harsh light of reality into its colourful components.

MAHMUD DARWISH

(b. March 13, 1942, Birwa, Palestine [now Israel]—d. Aug. 9, 2008, Houston, Texas, U.S.)

The Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish gave voice to the struggles of the Palestinian people.

After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Darwish witnessed massacres that forced his family to escape to Lebanon. A year later their clandestine return to their homeland put them in limbo, as they were declared "present-absent aliens." Darwish left Birwa a second time in 1970 and traveled to the Soviet Union to complete his education in Moscow. He lived in Cairo, Beirut, London, and Paris, as well as Tunis, Tunisia, before returning in 1996 to live in Palestine, in the West Bank town of Ramallah. He was a member of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and wrote the declaration of independence issued by the Palestine National Council in 1988, but he resigned from the PLO in 1993 to protest the signing of the Oslo Accords by PLO chairman Yasir 'Arafat. In 2000 the Israeli education minister made plans to include Darwish's poems of reconciliation in the school curriculum, but Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak vetoed the plan.

Darwish authored several books of prose and more than 20 collections of poetry. From 1981 he also served as editor of the literary journal *Al-Karmel*. The power of his poetry could be explained by the sincerity of his emotions and the originality of his poetic images. He borrowed from the Old and New Testaments, classical Arabic literature, Arab Islamic history, and Greek and Roman mythology to construct his metaphors. It was Darwish's conviction that his life in exile inspired his creative work. He often personified Palestine itself as a mother or a cruel beloved. In his single-poem volume *Halat hisar* (2002; "A State of Siege"), Darwish explored the multiple reoccupations of Ramallah and described the resulting sense of Palestinian isolation. However, he foresaw a future of peace and coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians that could be achieved through

dialogue between cultures. Darwish diverged from the political in some of his poems, relying on symbolism to relate personal experience. He devoted an entire collection, *Jidariyya* (2002; "Mural"), to his brush with death following heart surgery in 1998. Collections of his poems in English translation include *The Adam of Two Edens* (2000), *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise* (2003), and *The Butterfly's Burden* (2007).

Darwish's work was translated into some two dozen languages. Among his many international awards were the Lenin Peace Prize (1983), the French medal of Knight of Arts and Belles Lettres (1997), the *wisam* (order) of intellectual merit from Moroccan King Muhammad VI in 2000, and the 2001 Lannan Foundation Prize for Cultural Freedom. He died after undergoing heart surgery in the United States.

Mahmud Darwish in 2007. Getty Images

Poets such as the Lebanese Adonis ('Ali Ahmad Sa'id) and Tawfiq al-Sa'igh, or the Egyptian dramatist Salah 'Abd al-Sabur, made use of traditional imagery in a new, sometimes esoteric, and often fascinating and daring way.

Persian

Almost the same situation developed in Iran. One notable poet was Forugh Farrokhzad, who wrote powerful and very feminine poetry. Her free verses, interpreting the insecurities of the age, are full of longing; though often bitter, they are yet truly poetic. Poems by such critically minded writers as Seyavush Kasra'i also borrow the classical heritage of poetic imagery, transforming it into expressions that win a response from modern readers. Censorship exerted by the Islamic Republic of Iran after 1979 did much to curtail the free expression of poets.

Turkish

In Turkey, the adoption of Western forms began in the 1920s. Of major importance in modern Turkish literature was Orhan Veli Kanık, who combined perfect technique with "Istanbulian" charm. His work is sometimes melancholy, sometimes frivolous, but always convincing. He strongly influenced a group of poets connected with the avant-garde literary magazine *Varlik* ("Existence"). The powerful poetry of the leftist writer Nazım Hikmet influenced progressive poets all over the Muslim world; Ataol Behramoglu was often considered his successor during the latter half of the 20th century. Fazıl Hüsnü Daglarca was another poet with leftist views. His modernist poetry made him one of Turkey's most influential poets during the post–World War II era. The poetry of Hilmi Yavuz melded the aesthetics of Ottoman civilization with modernist poetic forms. His interweaving of past and present

was typical of many Turkish poets in the last decades of the 20th century.

General Considerations

In the Arab-speaking world, the problem of language loomed large as the 20th century drew to a close. Classical high Arabic remained the common literary language of Morocco, Iraq, Tunisia, and Kuwait, although spoken Arabic in dialectal variations was beginning to be used—but tentatively—in higher literature. It was, and still is, more frequently employed in the popular spheres of theatre and cinema. But the local differences that exist in Arabic spoken from country to country have today become perceptible in literature; popular grammatical forms and syntactical constructions are occasionally used in modern poetry. A special problem arises in North Africa, where French continues to be the chief literary language for most writers, especially in Morocco and Algeria. Yet there is no hard-and-fast rule: a leading member of the Senegal community, Amadou Bamba, who founded the politically important group of the Muridis, wrote some 20,000 mystically tinged verses in classical Arabic (quite apart from practical words of wisdom in his mother tongue).

Throughout the Islamic countries, radio, television, and other media have helped to disseminate literary works; prizes for literary achievements have stimulated interest in writing; and low-priced books have made the output of a growing number of writers available to the majority—the more so since literacy among the population steadily increases. But to what degree this means a continuation of the cultural role that Islamic literatures have played in the formation and education of society over the centuries is not yet clear. Literature was never restricted to a privileged high society; in olden times even the illiterate villager

and the "uneducated" womenfolk had a fund of poems, proverbs, songs, and quotations from classical sources that they knew by heart and to which they turned for both pleasure and spiritual strength.

One final issue should be noted. The introduction in the second half of the 20th century of modern methods of criticism, of psychology and philosophy, kindled a new interest in significant figures of the Islamic past. Thus, to cite one instance, al-Hallaj (executed 922), who often served as a symbolic figure of "the martyr of love" in both classical and folk poetry after the 11th century, was made the subject of a Turkish drama, a Persian passion play, and an Arabic tragedy, and he plays an important role in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Indian Muslim lyrical poetry. He came to be interpreted as a symbol of suffering for one's ideals, and he therefore was considered acceptable by both to conservative Muslims and progressive social critics.

Chapter 5

Islamic Visual Arts

In order to answer whether or not there is an aesthetic, iconographic, or stylistic unity to the visually perceptible arts of Islamic peoples, it is first essential to realize that no ethnic or geographical entity was Muslim from the beginning. There is no Islamic art, therefore, in the way there is a Chinese art or a French art. Nor is it simply a period art, like Gothic art or Baroque art, for once a land or an ethnic entity became Muslim it remained Muslim, a small number of exceptions like Spain or Sicily notwithstanding. Political and social events transformed a number of lands with a variety of earlier histories into Muslim lands. But, since early Islam as such did not possess or propagate an art of its own, each area could continue, and in fact often did continue, whatever modes of creativity it had acquired. It may then not be appropriate at all to talk about the visual arts of Islamic peoples, and one should instead consider separately each of the areas that became Muslim: Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Iran, Anatolia, and India. Such, in fact, has been the direction taken by some recent scholarship. Even though

tainted at times with parochial nationalism, the approach has been useful in that it has focused attention on a number of permanent features in different regions of Islamic lands that are older than and independent from the faith itself and from the political entity created by it. Iranian art, in particular, exhibits a number of features (certain themes such as the representation of birds or an epic tradition in painting) that owe little to its Islamic character since the 7th century. Ottoman art shares a Mediterranean tradition of architectural conception with Italy rather than with the rest of the Muslim world.

Such examples can easily be multiplied, but it is probably wrong to overdo their importance. For if one looks at the art of Islamic lands from a different perspective, a totally different picture emerges. The perspective is that of the lands that surround the Muslim world or of the times that preceded its formation. For even if there are ambiguous examples, most observers can recognize a flavour, a mood in Islamic visual arts that is distinguishable from what is known in East Asia (China, Korea, and Japan) or in the Christian West. This mood or flavour has been called decorative, for it seems at first glance to emphasize an immense complexity of surface effects without apparent meanings attached to the visible motifs. But it has other characteristics as well; it is often colourful, both in architecture and in objects; it avoids representations of living things; it gives much prominence to the work of artisans and counts among its masterpieces not merely works of architecture or of painting but also the creations of weavers, potters, and metalworkers. The problem is whether these uniquenesses of Islamic art, when compared to other artistic traditions, are the result of the nature of Islam or of some other factor or series of factors.

These preliminary remarks suggest at the very outset the main epistemological peculiarity of Islamic art: it

consists of a large number of quite disparate traditions that, when seen all together, appear distinguishable from what surrounded them and from what preceded them through a series of stylistic and thematic characteristics. The key question is how this was possible, but no answer can be given before the tradition itself has been properly defined.

Such a definition can only be provided in history, through an examination of the formation and development of the arts through the centuries. For a static sudden phenomenon is not being dealt with, but rather a slow building up of a visual language of forms with many dialects and with many changes. Whether or not these complexities of growth and development subsumed a common structure is the challenging question facing the historian of this artistic tradition. What makes the question particularly difficult to answer is that the study of Islamic art is still relatively new. Many monuments are unpublished or at least insufficiently known, and only a handful of scientific excavations have investigated the physical setting of the culture and of its art. Much, therefore, remains tentative in the knowledge and appreciation of works of Islamic art.

Each artistic tradition has tended to develop its own favourite mediums and techniques. Some, of course, such as architecture, are automatic needs of every culture; and, for reasons to be developed later, it is in the medium of architecture that some of the most characteristically Islamic works of art are found. Other techniques, on the other hand, acquire varying forms and emphases. Sculpture in the round hardly existed as a major art form, and, although such was also the case of all Mediterranean arts at the time of Islam's growth, one does not encounter the astounding rebirth of sculpture that occurred in the West. Wall painting existed but has generally been poorly preserved; the great Islamic art of painting was limited to the

illustration of books. The unique feature of Islamic techniques is the astounding development taken by the so-called decorative arts—e.g., woodwork, glass, ceramics, metalwork, textiles. New techniques were invented and spread throughout the Muslim world—at times even beyond its frontiers. In dealing with Islam, therefore, it is quite incorrect to think of these techniques as the "minor" arts. For the amount and intensity of creative energies spent on the decorative arts transformed them into major artistic forms, and their significance in defining a profile of the aesthetic and visual language of Islamic peoples is far greater than in the instances of many other cultures. Furthermore, since, for a variety of reasons to be discussed later, the Muslim world did not develop until quite late the notion of "noble" arts, the decorative arts have reflected far better the needs and ambitions of the culture as a whole. The kind of conclusion that can be reached about Islamic civilization through its visual arts thus extends far deeper than is usual in the study of an artistic tradition, and it requires a combination of archaeological, art-historical, and textual information.

An example may suffice to demonstrate the point. Among all the techniques of Islamic visual arts, the most important one was the art of textiles. Textiles, of course, were used for daily wear at all social levels and for all occasions. But clothes were also the main indicators of rank, and they were given as rewards or as souvenirs by princes, high and low. They were a major status symbol, and their manufacture and distribution were carefully controlled through a complicated institution known as the *tiraz*. Major events were at times celebrated by being depicted on silks. Many texts have been identified that describe the hundreds of different kinds of textiles that existed. Since textiles could easily be moved, they became a vehicle for the transmission of artistic themes within the Muslim

world and beyond its frontiers. In the case of this one technique, therefore, one is not dealing simply with a medium of the decorative arts but with a key medium in the definition of a given time's taste, of its practical functions, and of the ways in which its ideas were distributed. The more unfortunate point is that the thousands of fragments that have remained have not yet been studied in a sufficiently systematic way, and in only a handful of instances has it been possible to relate individual fragments to known texts. When more work has been completed, however, a study of this one medium should contribute significantly to the commercial, social, and aesthetic history of Islam, as well as explain much of the impact that Islamic art had beyond the frontiers of the Muslim world.

The following survey of Islamic visual arts, therefore, will be primarily a historical one, for it is in development through time that the main achievements of Islamic art can best be understood. At the same time, other features peculiar to this tradition will be kept in mind: the varying importance of different lands, each of which had identifiable artistic features of its own, and the uniqueness of some techniques of artistic creativity over others.

ORIGINS

Earlier Artistic Traditions

Islamic visual arts were created by the confluence of two entirely separate kinds of phenomena: a number of earlier artistic traditions and a new faith. The arts inherited by Islam were of extraordinary technical virtuosity and stylistic or iconographic variety. All the developments of arcuated and vaulted architecture that had taken place in Iran and in the Roman Empire were available in their

countless local variants. Stone, baked brick, mud brick, and wood existed as mediums of construction, and all the complicated engineering systems developed particularly in the Roman Empire were still used from Spain to the Euphrates. All the major techniques of decoration were still used, except for monumental sculpture. In secular and in religious art, a more or less formally accepted equivalence between representation and represented subject had been established. Technically, therefore, as well as ideologically, the Muslim world took over an extremely sophisticated system of visual forms; and, since the Muslim conquest was accompanied by a minimum of destruction, all the monuments, and especially the attitudes attached to them, were passed on to the new culture.

The second point about the pre-Islamic traditions is the almost total absence of anything from Arabia itself. While archaeological work in the peninsula may modify this conclusion in part, it does seem that Islamic art formed itself entirely in some sort of relationship to non-Arab traditions. Even the rather sophisticated art created in earlier times by the Palmyrenes or by the Nabataeans had almost no impact on Islamic art, and the primitively conceived haram in Mecca, the only pre-Islamic sanctuary maintained by the new faith, remained as a unique monument that was almost never copied or imitated despite its immense religious significance. The pre-Islamic sources of Islamic art are thus entirely extraneous to the milieu in which the new faith was created. In this respect the visual arts differ considerably from most other aspects of Islamic culture.

This is not to say that there was no impact of the new faith on the arts, but to a large extent it was an incidental impact, the result of the existence of a new social and political entity rather than of a doctrine. Earliest Islam as seen in the Qur'an or in the more verifiable accounts of

the Prophet's life simply do not deal with the arts, either on the practical level of requiring or suggesting forms as expressions of the culture or on the ideological level of defining a Muslim attitude toward images. In all instances, concrete Qur'anic passages later used for the arts had their visual significance extrapolated.

There is no prohibition against representations of living things, and not a single Qur'anic passage refers clearly to the mosque, eventually to become the most characteristically Muslim religious building. In the simple, practical, and puritanical milieu of early Islam, aesthetic or visual questions simply did not arise.

The Mosque

The impact of the faith on the arts occurred rather as the fledgling culture encountered the earlier non-Islamic world and sought to justify its own acceptance or rejection of new ways and attitudes. The discussion of two examples of particular significance illustrates the point. One is the case of the mosque. The word itself derives from the Arabic *masjid*, "a place where one prostrates one's self (in front of God)." It was a common term in pre-Islamic Arabic and in the Qur'an, where it is applied to sanctuaries in general without restriction. If a more concrete significance was meant, the word was used in construct with some other term, as in *masjid al-haram*, to refer to the Meccan sanctuary. There was no need in earliest times for a uniquely Muslim building, for any place could be used for private prayer as long as the correct direction (*qiblah*, originally Jerusalem, but very soon Mecca) was observed and the proper sequence of gestures and pious statements was followed. In addition to private prayer, which had no formal setting, Islam instituted a collective prayer on Fridays, where the same ritual was accompanied by a

sermon from the imam (leader of prayer, originally the Prophet, then his successors, and later legally any able-bodied Muslim) and by the more complex ceremony of the *khutbah*, a collective swearing of allegiance to the community's leadership. This ceremony served to strengthen the common bond between all members of the *ummah*, the Muslim "collectivity," and its importance in creating and maintaining the unity of early Islam has often been emphasized. There were two traditional locales for this event in the Prophet's time. One was his private house, whose descriptions have been preserved; it was a large open space with private rooms on one side and rows of palm trunks making a colonnade on two other sides, the deeper colonnade being on the side of the *qiblah*. The Prophet's house was not a sanctuary but simply the most convenient place for the early community to gather. Far less is known about the second place of gathering for the Muslim community. It was used primarily on major feast days, such as the end of the fasting period or the feast of sacrifice. It was called a *musalla*, literally "a place for prayer," and *musalla*s were usually located outside city walls. Nothing is known about the shape taken by *musalla*s, but in all probability they were as simple as pre-Islamic pagan sanctuaries: large enclosures surrounded by a wall and devoid of any architectural or ornamental feature.

Altogether then there was hardly anything that could be identified as a holy building or as an architectural form. To be complete, one should add two additional features. One is an action, the call to prayer (*adhan*). It became, fairly rapidly, a formal moment preceding the gathering of the faithful. One man would climb on the roof and proclaim that God is great and that men must congregate to pray. There was no formal monument attached to the ceremony, though it eventually led to the ubiquitous minaret. The

other early feature was an actual structure. It was the *minbar*, a chair with several steps on which the Prophet would climb in order to preach. The monument itself had a pre-Islamic origin, but Muhammad transformed it into a characteristically Muslim form.

With the exception of the *minbar*, only a series of actions was formulated in early Islamic times. There were no forms attached to them, nor were any needed. But, as the Muslim world grew in size, the contact with many other cultures brought about two developments. On the one hand there were thousands of examples of beautiful religious buildings that impressed the conquering Arabs. But, more importantly, the need arose to preserve the restricted uniqueness of the community of faithful and to express its separateness from other groups. Islamic religious architecture began with this need and, in ways to be described later, created a formal setting for the activities, ceremonies, and ideas that had been formless at the outset.

The Prohibition Against Images

A second and closely parallel development of the impact of the Islamic religion on the visual arts is the celebrated question of a Muslim iconoclasm. As has already been mentioned, the Qur'an does not utter a word for or against the representation of living things. It is equally true that from about the middle of the 8th century a prohibition had been formally stated, and thenceforth it would be a standard feature of Islamic thought, even though the form in which it is expressed has varied from absolute to partial and even though it has never been totally followed. The justification for the prohibition tended to be that any representation of a living thing was an act of competition with God, for he alone can create something that is alive.

It is striking that this theological explanation reflects the state of the arts in the Christian world at the time of the Muslim conquest—a period of iconoclastic controversy. It may thus be suggested that Islam developed an attitude toward images as it came into contact with other cultures and that its attitude was negative because the arts of the time appeared to lead easily to dreaded idolatry. While it is only by the middle of the 8th century that there is actual proof of the existence of a Muslim doctrine, it is likely that, more or less intuitively, the Muslims felt a certain reluctance toward representations from the very beginning. For all monuments of religious art are devoid of any representations; even a number of attempts at representational symbolism in the official art of coinage were soon abandoned.

This rapid crystallization of Islamic attitudes toward images has considerable significance. For practical purposes, representations are not found in religious art, although matters are quite different in secular art. Instead there occurred very soon a replacement of imagery with calligraphy and the concomitant transformation of calligraphy into a major artistic medium. Furthermore, the world of Islam tended to seek means of representing the holy other than by images of men, and one of the main problems of interpretation of Islamic art is that of the degree of means it achieved in this search. But there is a deeper aspect to this rejection of holy images. Although the generally Semitic or specifically Jewish sources that have been given to Islamic iconoclasms have probably been exaggerated, the reluctance imposed by the circumstances of the 7th century transformed into a major key of artistic creativity the magical fear of visual imagery that exists in all cultures but that is usually relegated to a secondary level. This uniqueness is certainly one of the main causes of the abstract tendencies

that are among the great glories of the tradition. Even when a major art of painting did develop, it remained always somehow secondary to the mainstream of the culture's development.

Both in the case of the religious building and in that of the representations, therefore, it was the contact with pre-Islamic cultures in Muslim-conquered areas that compelled Islam to transform its practical and unique needs into monuments and to seek within itself for intellectual and theological justifications for its own instincts. The great strength of early Islam was that it possessed within itself the ideological means to put together a visual expression of its own, even though it did not develop at the very beginning a need for such an expression.

One last point can be made about the origins of Islamic art. It concerns the degree of importance taken by the various artistic and cultural entities conquered by the Arabs in the 7th and 8th centuries, for the early empire had gathered in regions that had not been politically or even ideologically related for centuries. During the first century or two of Islam, the main models and the main sources of inspiration were certainly the Christian centres around the Mediterranean. But the failure to capture Constantinople and to destroy the Byzantine Empire also made these Christian centres inimical competitors, whereas the whole world of Iran became an integral part of the empire, even though the conquering Arabs were far less familiar with the latter than with the former. A much more complex problem is posed by conversions, for it is through the success of the militant Muslim religious mission that the culture expanded so rapidly. Insofar as one can judge, it is the common folk, primarily in cities, who took over the new faith most rapidly; and thus there was added in early Islamic culture a folk element whose impact may have been larger than has hitherto been imagined.

These preliminary considerations on the origins of Islamic art have made it possible to outline several of the themes and problems that remained constant features of the tradition: a self-conscious sense of uniqueness when compared to others; a continuous reference to its own Qur'anic sources; a constant relationship to many different cultures; a folk element; and a variety of regional developments. None of these features remained constant, not even those aspects of the faith that affected the arts. But while they changed, the fact of their existence, their structural presence, remained a constant of Islamic art.

EARLY PERIOD: THE UMAYYAD AND 'ABBASID DYNASTIES

Of all the recognizable periods of Islamic art, this approximately 400-year period encompassing Islam's first two major dynasties is by far the most difficult one to explain properly, even though it is quite well documented. There are two reasons for this difficulty. On the one hand, it was a formative period, a time when new forms were created that identify the aesthetic and practical ideals of the new culture. Such periods are difficult to define when, as in the case of Islam, there was no artistic need inherent to the culture itself. The second complication derives from the fact that Muslim conquest hardly ever destroyed former civilizations with its own established creativity. Material culture, therefore, continued as before, and archaeologically it is almost impossible to distinguish between pre-Islamic and early Islamic artifacts. Paradoxical though it may sound, there is an early Islamic Christian art of Syria and Egypt, and in many other regions the parallel existence of a Muslim and of a non-Muslim art continued for centuries. What did happen during early Islamic times, however, was the establishment of a dominant new taste,

and it is the nature and character of this taste that has to be explained. It occurred first in Syria and Iraq, the two areas with the largest influx of Muslims and with the two successive capitals of the empire, Damascus under the Umayyads and Baghdad under the early 'Abbasids. From Syria and Iraq this new taste spread in all directions and adapted itself to local conditions and local materials, thus creating considerable regional and chronological variations in early Islamic art.

From a historical point of view two major dynasties are involved. One is the Umayyad dynasty, which ruled from 661 to 750 and whose monuments are datable from 680 to 745. It was the only Muslim dynasty ever to control the whole of the Islamic-conquered world. The second dynasty is the 'Abbasid dynasty; technically its rule extended as late as 1258, but in reality its princes ceased to be a significant cultural factor after the second decade of the 10th century. The 'Abbasids no longer controlled Spain, where an independent Umayyad caliphate had been established; and in Egypt as well as in northeastern Iran a number of more or less independent dynasties appeared, such as the Tulunids or the Samanids.

Although this conclusion is less certain than it used to be for the Samanids and northeast Iran, the initial impulse for the artistic creativity of these dynasties came from the main 'Abbasid centres in Iraq. While in detailed

Bowl from Nishapur, lead-glazed earthenware with a slip decoration; in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

studies it is possible to distinguish between Umayyad and ʿAbbasid art or between the arts of various provinces, the key features of the first three centuries of Islamic art (roughly through the middle of the 10th century) are the interplay between local or imperial impulses and the creation of new forms and functions.

It is possible to study these centuries as a succession of clusters of monuments, but, since there are so many of them, a study can easily end up as an endless list. It is preferable, therefore, to centre the discussion of Umayyad and ʿAbbasid monuments on the functional and morphological (form and structure) characteristics that identify the new Muslim world and only secondarily be concerned with stylistic progression or regional differences.

Architecture

Early Religious Buildings

The one obviously new function developed during this period is that of the mosque, or *masjid*. The earliest adherents of Islam used the private house of the Prophet in Medina as the main place for their religious and other activities and *musalla*s without established forms for certain holy ceremonies. The key phenomenon of the first decades that followed the conquest is the creation outside of Arabia of *masjid*s in every centre taken over by the new faith. These were not simply or even primarily religious centres. They were rather the community centres of the faithful, in which all social, political, educational, and individual affairs were transacted. The first mosques were built primarily to serve as the restricted space in which the new community would take its own collective decisions. It is there that the treasury of the community was kept, and early accounts are full of anecdotes about the immense

variety of events, from the dramatic to the scabrous, that took place in mosques. Since even in earliest times the Muslim community consisted of several superimposed and interconnected social systems, mosques reflected this complexity, and, next to large mosques for the whole community, tribal mosques and mosques for various quarters of a town or city are also known.

None of these early mosques has survived, and no descriptions of the smaller ones have been preserved. There do remain, however, accurate textual descriptions of the large congregational buildings erected at Kufah and Basra in Iraq and at al-Fustat in Egypt. At Kufah a larger square was marked out by a ditch, and a covered colonnade known as a *zullah* (a shady place) was put up on the *qiblah* side. In 670 a wall pierced by many doors was built in place of the ditch, and colonnades were put up on all four sides, with a deeper one on the *qiblah*. In all probability the Basra mosque was very similar, and only minor differences distinguished the ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAs mosque at al-Fustat. Much has been written about the sources of this type of building, but the simplest explanation may be that this is the very rare instance of the actual creation of a new architectural type. The new faith's requirement for centralization, or a space for a large and constantly growing community, could not be met by any existing architectural form.

Almost accidentally, therefore, the new Muslim cities of Iraq created the hypostyle mosque (a building with the roof resting on rows of columns). A flexible architectural unit, a hypostyle structure could be square or rectangular and could be increased or diminished in size by the addition or subtraction of columns. The single religious or symbolic feature of the hypostyle mosque was a *minbar* (a pulpit) for the preacher, and the direction of prayer was indicated by the greater depth of the colonnade on one side of the structure.

The examples of Kufah, Basra, and al-Fustat are particularly clear because they were all built in newly created cities. Matters are somewhat more complex when discussing the older urban centres taken over by Muslims. Although it is not possible to generalize with any degree of certainty, two patterns seem to emerge. In some cases, such as Jerusalem and Damascus and perhaps in most cities conquered through formal treaties, the Muslims took for themselves an available unused space and erected on it some shelter, usually a very primitive one. In Jerusalem this space happened to be a particularly holy one—the area of the Jewish Temple built by Herod I the Great, which had been left willfully abandoned and ruined by the triumphant Christian empire. In Damascus it was a section of a huge Roman temple area, on another part of which there was a church dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Unfortunately too little is known about other cities to be able to demonstrate that this pattern was a common one. The very same uncertainty surrounds the second pattern, which consisted in forcibly transforming sanctuaries of older faiths into Muslim ones. This was the case at Hamah in Syria and at Yazd-e Khvast in Iran, where archaeological proof exists of the change. There are also several literary references to the fact that Christian churches, Zoroastrian fire temples, and other older abandoned sanctuaries were transformed into mosques. Altogether, however, these instances probably were not too numerous, because in most places the Muslim conquerors were quite anxious to preserve local tradition and because few older sanctuaries could easily serve the primary Muslim need of a large centralizing space.

During the 50 years that followed the beginning of the Muslim conquest, the mosque, until then a very general concept in Islamic thought, became a definite building

reserved for a variety of needs required by the community of faithful in any one settlement. Only in one area, Iraq, did the mosque acquire a unique form of its own, the oriented hypostyle. Neither in Iraq nor elsewhere is there evidence of symbolic or functional components in mosque design. The only exception is that of the *maqsurah* (literally "closed-off space"), an enclosure, probably in wood, built near the centre of the *qiblah* wall. Its purpose was to protect the caliph or his replacement, for several attacks against major political figures had taken place. But the *maqsurah* was never destined to be a constant fixture of mosques, and its typological significance is limited.

Three Great Mosques

During the rule of the Umayyad prince al-Walid I (705–715), a number of complex developments within the Muslim community were crystallized in the construction of three major mosques, at Medina, Jerusalem, and Damascus. The very choice of these three cities is indicative: the city in which the Muslim state was formed and in which the Prophet was buried; the city held in common holiness by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, to which was rapidly accruing the mystical hagiography surrounding the Prophet's ascension into heaven; and the ancient city that became the capital of the new Islamic empire. A first and essential component of al-Walid's mosques was, thus, their imperial character; they were to symbolize the permanent establishment of the new faith and of the state that derived from it. They were no longer purely practical shelters but willful monuments.

Although the plans of al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and of the mosque of Medina can be reconstructed with a fair degree of certainty, only the one at Damascus has been preserved with comparatively minor alterations and repairs.

Courtyard of the Great Mosque of Damascus, Syria, built by al-Walid I, 705–715, showing the Bayt al-Mal (treasury) on the left, beyond which can be seen one of the three towers of the first Muslim minaret. Paul Almasy

In plan the three buildings appear at first glance to be quite different from each other. The Medina mosque was essentially a large hypostyle with a courtyard. The colonnades on all four sides were of varying depth. Al-Aqsa Mosque consisted of an undetermined number of naves (possibly as many as 15) parallel to each other in a north–south direction. There was no courtyard because the rest

of the huge esplanade of the former Jewish temple served as the open space in front of the building. The Umayyad Mosque of Damascus is a rectangle 515 by 330 feet (157 by 100 metres) whose outer limits and three gates are parts of a Roman temple (a fourth Roman gate on the *qiblah* side was blocked). The interior consists of an open space surrounded on three sides by a portico and of a covered space of three equal long naves parallel to the *qiblah* wall that are cut in the middle by a perpendicular nave.

The three buildings share several important characteristics. They are all large spaces with a multiplicity of internal supports; and although only the Medina mosque is a pure hypostyle, the Jerusalem and Damascus mosques have the flexibility and easy internal communication characteristic of a hypostyle building. All three mosques exhibit a number of distinctive new practical elements and symbolic meanings. Many of these occur in all mosques; others are only known in some of them. The mihrab, for example, appears in all mosques. This is a niche of varying size that tends to be heavily decorated. It occurs in the *qiblah* wall, and, in all probability, its purpose was to commemorate the symbolic presence of the Prophet as the first imam, although there are other explanations. It is only in Damascus that the ancient towers of the Roman building were first used as minarets to call the faithful to prayer and to indicate from afar the presence of Islam (initially minarets tended to exist only in predominantly non-Muslim cities). All three mosques are also provided with an axial nave, a wider aisle unit on the axis of the building, which served both as a formal axis for compositional purposes and as a ceremonial one for the prince's retinue. Finally, all three buildings were heavily decorated with marble, mosaics, and woodwork. At least in the mosque of Damascus, it is further apparent that there was careful concern for the formal composition—a

balance between parts that truly makes this mosque a work of art. This is particularly evident in the successful relationship established between the open space of the court and the facade of the covered *qiblah* side.

When compared to the first Muslim buildings of Iraq and Egypt, the monuments of al-Walid are characterized by the growing complexity of their forms, by the appearance of uniquely Muslim symbolic and functional features, and by the quality of their construction. While the dimensions, external appearance, and proportions of any one of them were affected in each case by unique local circumstances, the internal balance between open and covered areas and the multiplicity of simple and flexible supports indicate the permanence of the early hypostyle tradition.

Other Classic Mosques

Either in its simplest form, as in Medina, or in its more formalized shape, as in Damascus, the hypostyle tradition dominated mosque architecture from 715 to the 10th century. As it occurs at Nishapur in northeastern Iran, Siraf in southern Iran, al-Qayrawan (Kairouan) in Tunisia, and Córdoba in Spain, it can indeed be considered as the classic early Islamic type. Its masterpieces occur in Iraq and in the West. The monumentalization of the early Iraqi hypostyle is illustrated by the two ruined structures in Samarra', with their enormous sizes (790 by 510 feet [240 by 156 metres] for one and 700 by 440 feet [213 by 135 metres] for the other), their multiple entrances, their complex piers, and, in one instance, a striking separation of the *qiblah* area from the rest of the building. The best preserved example of this type is the mosque of Ibn Tulun at Cairo (876–879), where a semi-independent governor, Ahmad ibn Tulun, introduced Iraqi techniques and succeeded in creating a masterpiece of composition.

Interior of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, Spain, begun 785. Alfonso Gutierrez Escera/Ostman Agency

Two classic examples of early mosques in the western Islamic world of interest are preserved in Tunisia and Spain. In al-Qayrawan the Great Mosque was built in stages between 836 and 866. Its most striking feature is the formal emphasis on the building's T-like axis punctuated by two domes, one of which hovers over the earliest preserved ensemble of mihrab, *minbar*, and *maqsurah*. At Córdoba the earliest section of the Great Mosque was built in 785–786. It consisted simply of 11 naves with a wider central one and a court. It was enlarged twice in length, first between 833 and 855 and again from 961 to 965 (it was in the latter phase that the celebrated *maqsurah* and mihrab, comprising one of the great architectural ensembles of early Islamic art, were constructed). Finally, in

987–988 an extension of the mosque was completed to the east that increased its size by almost one-third without destroying its stylistic unity. The constant increases in the size of this mosque are a further illustration of the flexibility of the hypostyle and its adaptability to any spatial requirement. The most memorable aspects of the Córdoba mosque, however, lie in its construction and decoration. The particularly extensive and heavily decorated mihrab area exemplifies a development that started with the Medina mosque and would continue: an emphasis on the *qiblah* wall.

Although the hypostyle mosque was the dominant plan, it was not the only one. From very early Islamic times, a fairly large number of aberrant plans also occur. Most of them were built in smaller urban locations or were secondary mosques in larger Muslim cities. It is rather difficult, therefore, to evaluate whether their significance was purely local or whether they were important for the tradition as a whole. Since a simple type of square subdivided by four piers into nine-domed units occurs at Balkh in Afghanistan, at Cairo, and at Toledo, it may be considered a pan-Islamic type. Other types, a single square hall surrounded by an ambulatory, or a single long barrel-vault parallel or perpendicular to the *qiblah*, are rarer and should perhaps be considered as purely local. These are particularly numerous in Iran, where it does seem that the mainstream of early Islamic architecture did not penetrate very deeply.

Other Types of Religious Buildings

The function of the mosque, the central gathering place of the Muslim community, became the major and most original completely Muslim architectural effort. The mosque was not a purely religious building, at least not at the

beginning; but, because it was restricted to Muslims, it is appropriate to consider it as such. This, however, was not the only type of early Islamic building to be uniquely Muslim. Three other types can be defined architecturally, and a fourth one only functionally.

The first type, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, is a unique building. Completed in 691, this masterwork of Islamic architecture is the earliest major Islamic monument. Its octagonal plan, use of a high dome, and building techniques are hardly original, although its decoration is unique. Its purpose, however, is what is most remarkable about the building. Since the middle of the 8th century, the Dome of the Rock has become the focal centre of the most mystical event in the life of the Prophet: his ascension into heaven from the rock around which the building was erected. According to an inscription preserved since the erection of the dome, however, it would seem that the building did not originally commemorate the Prophet's ascension but rather the Christology of Islam and its relationship to Judaism. It seems preferable, therefore, to interpret the Dome of the Rock as a victory monument of the new faith's ideological and religious claim on a holy city and on all the religious traditions attached to it.

The second distinctly Islamic type of religious building is the little-known *ribat*. As early as in the 8th century, the Muslim empire entrusted the protection of its frontiers, especially the remote ones, to warriors for the faith (*murabitun*, "bound ones") who lived, permanently or temporarily, in special institutions known as *ribat*s. Evidence for these exist in Central Asia, Anatolia, and North Africa. It is only in Tunisia that *ribat*s have been preserved. The best one is at Susah, Tunisia; it consists of a square fortified building with a single fairly elaborate entrance and a central courtyard. It has two stories of private or

communal rooms. Except for the prominence taken by an oratory, this building could be classified as a type of Muslim secular architecture. Since no later example of a *ribat* is known, there is some uncertainty as to whether the institution ever acquired a unique architectural form of its own.

The last type of religious building to develop before the end of the 10th century is the mausoleum. Originally Islam was strongly opposed to any formal commemoration of the dead. But three independent factors slowly modified an attitude that was eventually maintained only in the most strictly orthodox circles. One factor was the growth of the Shiʿite heterodoxy, which led to an actual cult of the descendants of the Prophet through his son-in-law ʿAli. The second factor was that, as Islam strengthened its hold on conquered lands, a wide variety of local cultic practices and especially the worship of certain sacred places began to affect the Muslims, resulting in a whole movement of Islamization of ancient holy places by associating them with deceased Muslim heroes and holy men or with prophets. The third factor is not, strictly speaking, religious, but it played a major part. As more or less independent local dynasties began to grow, they sought to commemorate themselves through mausoleums. Not many mausoleums have remained from these early centuries, but literary evidence is clear on the fact that the Shiʿite sanctuaries of Karbala' and al-Najaf, both in Iraq, and Qom, Iran, already possessed monumental tombs. The masterpieces of early funerary architecture occur in Central Asia, such as the royal mausoleum of the Samanids (known incorrectly as the mausoleum of Esmaʿil the Samanid) at Bukhara (before 942), which is a superb example of Islamic brickwork. In some instances a quasi-religious character was attached to the mausoleums, such as the one at Tim (976).

The fourth kind of Muslim building is the madrasah, an institution for religious training set up independently of mosques. It is known from texts that such privately endowed schools existed in the northeastern Iranian world as early as in the 9th century, but no description exists of how they were planned or how they looked.

Secular Architecture

Whereas the functions of the religious buildings of early Islam could not have existed without the new faith, the functions of secular Muslim architecture have a priori no specifically Islamic character. This is all the more so since one can hardly point to a significant new need or habit that would have been brought from Arabia by the conquering Muslims and since so little was destroyed in the conquered areas. It can be assumed, therefore, that all pre-Islamic functions such as living, trading, and manufacturing continued in whatever architectural setting they may have had. Only one exception is certain. With the disappearance of Sasanian kingship, the pre-Islamic Iranian imperial tradition ceased, and elsewhere conquered minor kings and governors left their palaces and castles. A new imperial power was created, located first in Damascus, then briefly in the northern Syrian town of al-Rusafah, and eventually in Baghdad and Samarra' in Iraq. New governors and, later, almost independent princes took over provincial capitals. In all instances, there is no reason to assume that for an architecture of power or of pleasure early Muslims would have felt the need to modify pre-Islamic traditions. In fact there is much in early Islamic secular architecture that can be used to illustrate secular arts elsewhere—in Byzantium, for example, or even in the West.

Three factors contributed to the evolution of a new secular architecture. One was that the accumulation of an

immense wealth of ideas, workers, and money in the hands of the Muslim princes settled in Syria and Iraq gave rise to a unique palace architecture. The second factor was the impetus given to urban life and to trade. New cities were founded from Sijilmassah on the edge of the Moroccan Sahara to Nishapur in northeastern Iran, and 9th-century Arab merchants traded as far away as China. Thus the second topic, to be treated below, will be the urban design and commercial architecture. The third factor is that, for the first time since Alexander the Great, a world extending from the Mediterranean to India became culturally unified. As a result, decorative motifs, design ideas, structural techniques, and artisans and architects—which until then had belonged to entirely different cultural traditions—were available in the same places. Early Islamic princely architecture has become the best known and most original aspect of early Islamic secular buildings.

Palaces

There are basically three kinds of these princely structures. The first type consists of 10 large rural princely complexes found in Syria, Palestine, and Transjordan dating from roughly 710 to 750: al-Rusafah, Qasr al-Hayr East, Qasr al-Hayr West, Jabal Says, Khirbat Minyah, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Mshatta, Qasr ʿAmrah, Qasr al-Kharanah, and Qasr al-Tubah. Apparently these examples of princely architecture belong to a group of more than 60 ruined or only textually identifiable rural complexes erected by Umayyad princes. These structures were each part of a major agricultural or trade centre, some of which were developed even before the Muslim conquest. Private palaces were built, notably at al-Rusafah, Qasr al-Hayr West, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Qasr ʿAmrah, and Mshatta. These must be considered as early medieval equivalents of the *villae rusticae* so characteristic in the ancient Roman period.

Although each of these had a number of idiosyncrasies that were presumably inspired by the needs and desires of its owner, all of these structures tend to share a number of features that can best be illustrated by Khirbat al-Mafjar.

This palace, the richest of them all, contained a residential unit consisting of a square building with an elaborate entrance, a porticoed courtyard, and a number of rooms or halls arranged on two floors. Few of these rooms seem to have any identifiable function, although at Khirbat al-Mafjar a private oratory, a large meeting hall, and an anteroom leading to a cool underground pool have been identified. The main throne room was on the second floor above the entrance. Its plan is not known but probably resembled the preserved throne rooms or reception halls at Qasr 'Amrah and Mshatta, which consisted of a three-aisled hall ending in an apse (semicircular or polygonal domed projection) in the manner of a Roman basilica.

Next to an official residence, there usually was a small mosque, generally a miniaturized hypostyle in plan. The most original feature of these establishments was the bath. The bathing area itself is comparatively small, but every bath had its own elaborate entrance and contained a large hall that, at least in the instance of Khirbat al-Mafjar, was heavily decorated and of an unusual shape. It would appear that these halls were for pleasure—places for music, dancing, and probably occasional orgies. In some instances, as at Qasr 'Amrah, the same setting may have been used for both pleasure and formal receptions.

These palaces are important illustrations of the luxurious taste and way of life of the new aristocrats, who settled in the countryside. This aspect of these establishments is peculiar to the Umayyad dynasty in Syria and Palestine. Outside of this area and period only one comparable structure has been found—at Ukhaydir in Iraq, which dates from the early 'Abbasid period. A number of

princely residences of the Central Asian or North African countryside are still too little known but appear not to have had the same development. The other important lesson to draw from them is that few of their features are original. All of them derive from the architectural vocabulary of pre-Islamic times, and, for as interesting as these monuments are, they are not part of the Islamic tradition.

A second type of princely architecture—the urban palace—has been preserved only in texts or literary sources, with the exception of the palace at Kufah in Iraq. Datable from the very end of the 7th century, this example of princely architecture seems to have functioned both as a residence and as the centre of government. This dual function is reflected in the use of separate building units and in the dearth of architectural decoration, which suggests that it reflected an austere official taste. Scholars do not have sufficient information to define these early urban official buildings of the Muslims.

Also poorly documented is a development in urban aristocratic buildings that seems to have begun with the ʿAbbasids during the last decades of the 8th century. This involved the construction of smaller palaces, probably pavilions in the midst of gardens in or around major cities.

The third type of early Islamic princely architecture is the palace-city. Several of these huge palaces are part of the enormous mass of ruins at Samarra', the temporary ʿAbbasid capital from 838 to 883. Jawsaq al-Khaqani, for instance, is a walled architectural complex nearly one mile to a side that in reality is an entire city. It contains a formal succession of large gates and courts leading to a cross-shaped throne room, a group of smaller living units, basins and fountains, and even a racetrack. Too little is known about the architectural details of these huge walled complexes to lead to more than very uncertain hypotheses. Their existence, however, suggests that they were settings

for the very elaborate ceremonies developed by the 'Abbasid princes, especially when receiving foreign ambassadors. An account, for instance, in Khatib al-Baghdadi's *Ta'rikh Baghdad* ("History of Baghdad") of the arrival in Baghdad of a Byzantine envoy in 914 illustrates this point. The meeting with the caliph was preceded by a sort of formal presentation intended to impress the ambassador with the Muslim ruler's wealth and power. Treasures were laid down, thousands of soldiers and slaves in rich clothes guarded them, lions roared in the gardens, and on gilded artificial trees mechanical devices made silver birds chirp. The ceremony was a fascinating mixture of a traditional attempt to re-create paradise on earth and a rather vulgar exhibition of wealth that required a huge space, as in the Samarra' palaces. Another important aspect of these palace-cities is that they became part of a myth. The walled enclosure in which thousands lived a life unknown to others and into which simple mortals did not penetrate without bringing their own shroud was transformed into legend. It became the mysterious City of Brass of *The Thousand and One Nights*, and it is from its luxurious glory that occasionally a caliph such as Harun al-Rashid escaped into the "real" world. Even though there is inadequate information on the 'Abbasid palace-city, it was clearly a unique early Islamic creation, and its impact can be detected from Byzantium to Hollywood.

Urban Design

Islamic secular architecture has left considerable information about cities, for systematic urbanization was one of the most characteristic features of early Muslim civilization. It is much too early to draw any sort of conclusion about the actual physical organization of towns, about their subdivisions and their houses, for only at al-Fustat (Cairo) and Siraf in Iran is the evidence archaeologically

clear, and much of it has not yet been properly published. In general it can be said that there does not seem to have been any idealized master plan for the internal arrangement of an urban site in contradistinction to Hellenistic or Roman towns. Even mosques or palaces were often located eccentrically and not in the middle of the town. Extraordinary attention was paid to water distribution and conservation, as demonstrated by the magnificent 9th-century cisterns in Tunisia, the 9th-century Nilometer (a device to measure the Nile's level) in Cairo, and the elaborate dams, canals, and sluices of Qasr al-Hayr in Syria. The construction of commercial buildings on a monumental scale occurred. The most spectacular example is the caravansary of Qasr al-Hayr East, with its magnificent gate.

The concern for palaces and cities that characterized early Islamic secular architecture shows itself most remarkably in the construction of Baghdad between 762 and 766–767 by the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mansur. It was a walled round city whose circular shape served to demonstrate Baghdad's symbolic identity as the navel of the universe. A thick ring of residential quarters was separated by four axial, commercial streets entered through spectacular gates. In the centre of the city there was a large open space with a palace, a mosque, and a few administrative buildings. By its size and number of inhabitants, Baghdad was unquestionably a city; however, its plan so strongly emphasized the presence of the caliph that it was also a palace.

Building Materials and Technology

The early Islamic period, on the whole, did not innovate much in the realm of building materials and technology but utilized what it had inherited from older traditions. Stone and brick continued to be used around the Mediterranean, while mud brick usually covered with

plaster predominated in Iraq and Iran, with a few notable exceptions like Siraf, where a masonry of roughly cut stones set in mortar was more common. The most important novelty was the rapid development in Iraq of a baked brick architecture in the late 8th and 9th centuries. Iraqi techniques were later used in Syria at al-Raqqah and Qasr al-Hayr East and in Egypt. Iranian brickwork appears at Mshatta in Jordan. Wood was used consistently but has usually not been very well preserved.

As supports for roofs and ceilings, early Islamic architecture used walls and single supports. Walls were generally continuous, often buttressed with half towers, and rarely (with exceptions in Central Asia) were they articulated or broken by other architectural features. The most common single support was the base–column–capital combination of Mediterranean architecture. Most columns and capitals were either reused from pre-Islamic buildings or were directly imitated from older models. In the 9th century in Iraq a brick pier was used, a form that spread to Iran and Egypt. Columns and piers were covered with arches. Most often these were semicircular arches; the pointed, or two-centred, arch was known, but it does not seem that its property of reducing the need for heavy supports had been realized. The most extraordinary technical development of arches occurs in the Great Mosque at Córdoba, where, in order to increase the height of the building in an area with only short columns, the architects created two rows of superimposed horseshoe arches. Almost immediately they realized that such a succession of superimposed arches constructed of alternating stone and brick could be modified to create a variety of patterns that would alleviate the inherent monotony of a hypostyle building. A certain ambiguity remains, however, as to whether ornamental effect or structural technology was the predominate concern in the creation of these unique arched columns.

The majority of early Islamic ceilings were flat. Gabled wooden roofs, however, were erected in the Muslim world west of the Euphrates and simple barrel vaults to the east. Vaulting, either in brick or in stone, was used, especially in secular architecture. Domes were employed frequently in mosques, consistently in mausoleums, and occasionally in secular buildings. Almost all domes are on squinches (supports carried across corners to act as structural transitions to a dome). Most squinches, as in the al-Qayrawan domes, are classical Greco-Roman niches, which transform the square room into an octagonal opening for the dome. In Córdoba's Great Mosque a complex system of intersecting ribs is encountered, while at Bukhara the squinch is broken into halves by a transverse half arch. The most extraordinary use of the squinch occurs in the mausoleum at Tim, where the surface of this structural device is broken into a series of smaller three-dimensional units rearranged into a sort of pyramidal pattern. This rearrangement is the earliest extant example of *muqarnas*, or stalactite-like decoration that would later be an important element of Islamic architectural ornamentation.

Architectural Decoration

Early Islamic architecture is most original in its decoration. Mosaics and wall paintings followed the practices of antiquity and were primarily employed in Syria, Palestine, and Spain. Stone sculpture existed, but stucco sculpture, first limited to Iran, spread rapidly throughout the early Islamic world. Not only were stone or brick walls covered with large panels of stucco sculpture, but this technique was used for sculpture in the round in the Umayyad palaces of Qasr al-Hayr West and Khirbat al-Mafjar. The latter was a comparatively short-lived technique, although it produced some of the few instances of monumental

Dome of the mihrab in the Great Mosque of Córdoba, Spain, c. *961.* Fritz Henle/Photo Researchers

sculpture anywhere in the early Middle Ages. A variety of techniques borrowed from the industrial arts were used for architectural ornamentation. The mihrab wall of al-Qayrawan's Great Mosque, for example, was covered with ceramics, while fragments of decorative woodwork have been preserved in Jerusalem and Egypt.

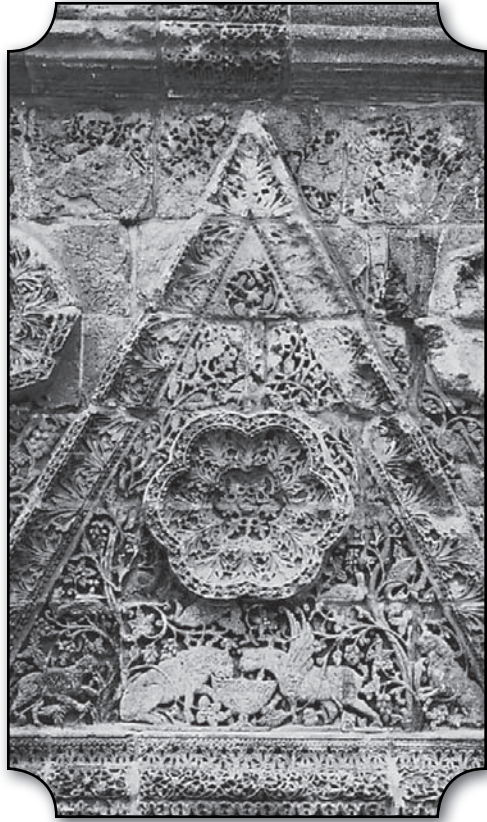
The themes and motifs of early Islamic decoration can be divided into three major groups. The first kind of

ornamentation simply emphasizes the shape or contour of an architectural unit. The themes used were vegetal bands for vertical or horizontal elements, marble imitations for the lower parts of long walls, chevrons or other types of borders on floors and domes, and even whole trees on the spandrels or soffits (undersides) of arches as in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus or the Dome of the Rock; all these motifs tend to be quite traditional, being taken from the rich decorative vocabularies of pre-Islamic Iran or of the ancient Mediterranean world.

The second group consists of decorative motifs for which a concrete iconographic meaning can be given. In the Dome of the Rock and the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, as well as possibly the mosques of Córdoba and of Medina, there were probably iconographic programs. It has been shown, for example, that the huge architectural and vegetal decorative motifs at Damascus were meant to symbolize a sort of idealized paradise on earth, while the crowns of the Jerusalem sanctuary are thought to have been symbols of empires conquered by Islam. But it is equally certain that this use of visual forms in mosques for ideological and symbolic purposes was not easily accepted, and most later mosques are devoid of iconographically significant themes. The only exceptions fully visible are the Qur'anic inscriptions in the mosque of Ibn Tulun at Cairo, which were used both as a reminder of the faith and as an ornamental device to emphasize the structural lines of the building. Thus the early Islamic mosque eventually became austere in its use of symbolic ornamentation, with the exception of the mihrab, which was considered as a symbol of the unity of all believers.

The third type of architectural decoration consists of large panels, most often in stucco, for which no meaning or interpretation is yet known. These panels might be

Triangle stone relief from the facade of Mshatta in Jordan, early 8th century; in the Museum of Islamic Art, Pergamon Museum, National Museums of Berlin. Courtesy of the Islamisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

called ornamental in the sense that their only apparent purpose was to beautify the buildings in which they were installed, and their relationship to the architecture is arbitrary. The Mshatta facade's decoration of a huge band of triangles is, for instance, quite independent of the building's architectural parts. Next to Mshatta, the most important series of examples of the third type of ornamentation come from Samarra', although striking examples are also to be found at Khirbat al-Mafjar, Qasr al-Hayr East and West, al-Fustat, Siraf, and Nishapur. Two decorative motifs were predominately used on these panels: a great variety of vegetal motifs and geometric forms. Copied consistently from Morocco to Central Asia, the aesthetic principles of this latter type of a complex overall design influenced the development of the principle of arabesque ornamentation.

Decorative Arts

Very little is known about early Islamic gold and silver objects, although their existence is mentioned in many texts as well as suggested by the wealth of the Muslim princes. Except for a large number of silver plates and ewers belonging to the Sasanian tradition, nothing has remained.

For entirely different reasons it is impossible to present any significant generalities about the art of textiles in the early Islamic period. Problems of authenticity are few. Dating from the 10th century are a large number of Buyid silks, a group of funerary textiles with plant and animal motifs as well as poetic texts. Very little order has yet been made of an enormous mass of often well-dated textile fragments, and therefore, except for the Buyid silks, it is still impossible to identify any one of the textile types mentioned in early medieval literary sources. Furthermore, since it can be assumed that pre-Islamic textile factories were taken over by the Muslims and since it is otherwise known that textiles were easily transported from one area of the Muslim world to the other or even beyond it, it is still very difficult to define Islamic styles as opposed to Byzantine or to Coptic ones.

The most important medium of early Islamic decorative arts is pottery. Initially Muslims continued to sponsor whatever varieties of ceramics had existed before their arrival. Probably in the last quarter of the 8th century new and more elaborate types of glazed pottery were produced. This new development did not replace the older and simpler types of pottery but added a new dimension to the art of Islamic ceramics. This section treats only the most general characteristics of Islamic ceramics.

The area of initial technical innovation seems to have been Iraq. Trade with Central Asia brought Chinese

ceramics to Mesopotamia, and Islamic ceramists sought to imitate them. It is probably in Iraq, therefore, that the technique of lustre glazing was first developed in the Muslim world. This gave the surface of a clay object a metallic, shiny appearance. Egypt also played a leading part in the creation of the new ceramics. Since the earliest datable lustre object (a glass goblet with the name of the governor who ruled in 773) was Egyptian, some scholars feel that it was in Egypt and not Iraq that lustre was first used. Early pottery was also produced in northeastern Iran, where excavations at Afrasiyab (Samarkand) and Nishapur have brought to light a new art of painted underglaze pottery. Its novelty was not so much in the technique of painting designs on the slip and covering them with a transparent glaze as in the variety of subjects employed.

While new ceramic techniques may have been sought to imitate other mediums (mostly metal) or other styles of pottery (mostly Chinese), the decorative devices rapidly became purely and unmistakably Islamic in style. A wide variety of motifs were combined: vegetal arabesques or single flowers and trees; inscriptions, usually legible and consisting of proverbs or of good wishes; animals that were usually birds drawn from the vast folkloric past of the Near East; occasionally human figures drawn in a strikingly abstract fashion; geometric designs; all-over abstract patterns; single motifs on empty fields; and simple splashes of colour, with or without underglaze sgraffito designs (i.e., designs incised or sketched on the body or the slip of the object). All of these motifs were used on both the high-quality ceramics of Nishapur and Samarkand as well as on Islamic folk pottery.

Although ceramics has appeared to be the most characteristic medium of expression in the decorative arts during the early Islamic period, it has only been because of the greater number of preserved objects. Glass was as

important, but examples have been less well preserved. A tradition of ivory carving developed in Spain, and the objects dating from the last third of the 10th century onward attest to the high quality of this uniquely Iberian art. Many of these carved ivories certainly were made for princes; therefore it is not surprising that their decorative themes were drawn from the whole vocabulary of princely art known through Umayyad painting and sculpture of the early 8th century. These ivory carvings are also important in that they exemplify the fact that an art of sculpture in the round never totally disappeared in the Muslim world—at least in small objects.

Assessment

There are three general points that seem to characterize the art of the early Islamic period. It can first be said that it was an art that sought self-consciously, like the culture sponsoring it, to create artistic forms that would be identifiable as being different from those produced in preceding or contemporary non-Islamic artistic traditions. Although initially some arts used or adapted other traditions, in ceramics and the use of calligraphic ornamentation, the early Islamic artist invented new techniques and a new decorative vocabulary. Whatever the nature of the phenomenon, it was almost always an attempt to identify itself visually as unique and different. Since there was initially no concept about what should constitute an Islamic tradition in the visual arts, the early art of the Muslims often looks like only a continuation of earlier artistic styles, forms, subjects, and techniques. Many mosaics, silver plates, or textiles, therefore, were not considered to be Islamic until the late 20th century. In order to be understood, then, as examples of the art of a new culture, these early buildings and objects have to be seen in the complete

context in which they were created. When so seen they appear as conscious choices by the new Islamic culture from its immense artistic inheritance.

A second point of definition concerns the question of whether there is an early Islamic style or perhaps even several styles in some sort of succession. The fascinating fact is that there is a clear succession only in those artistic features that are Islamic inventions—nonfigurative ornament and ceramics. Elsewhere, especially in palace art, the Muslim world sought to relate itself to an earlier and more universal tradition of princely art; its monuments, therefore, are less Islamic than typological.

Finally, the geographical peculiarities of early Islamic art must be reiterated. Its centres were Syria, Iraq, Egypt, northwestern Iran, and Spain. Of these, Iraq was probably the most originally creative, and it is from Iraq that a peculiarly Islamic visual koine (a commonly accepted and understood system of forms) was derived and spread throughout the Islamic world. This development, of course, is logical since the capital of the early empire and some of the first purely Muslim cities were in Iraq. In western Iran, in Afghanistan, in northern Mesopotamia, and in Morocco the more atypical and local artistic traditions were more or less affected by the centralized imperial system of Iraq. This tension between a general pan-Islamic vocabulary and a variable number of local vocabularies was to remain a constant throughout the history of Islamic art.

MIDDLE PERIOD

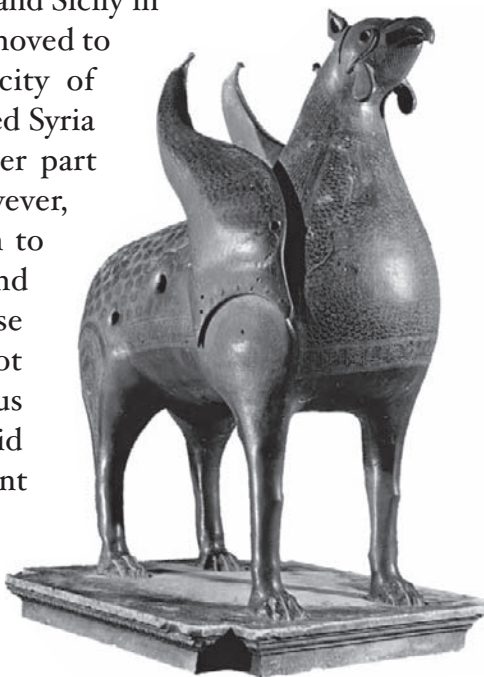
The middle period in the development of Islamic art extends roughly from the year 1000 to 1500, when a strong central power with occasional regional political independence was replaced by a bewildering mosaic of overlapping dynasties. Ethnically this was the time of major Turkish

and Mongol invasions that brought into the Muslim world new peoples and institutions. At the same time, Imazighen (Berbers), Kurds, and Iranians, who had been within the empire from the beginning of Islam, began to play far more effective historical and cultural roles, shortlived for the Kurds, but uniquely important for the Iranians. Besides political and ethnic confusion, there was also religious and cultural confusion during the middle period. The 10th century, for example, witnessed the transformation of the Shi'ite heterodoxy into a major political and possibly cultural phenomenon, while the extraordinary development taken by the personal and social mysticism known as Sufism modified enormously the nature of Muslim piety. Culturally the most significant development was perhaps that of Persian literature as a highly original new verbal expression existing alongside the older Arabic literary tradition. Finally, the middle period was an era of expansion in all areas except Spain, which was completely lost to the Muslims in 1492 with the conquest of the Kingdom of Granada by Ferdinand II and Isabella. Anatolia and the Balkans, the Crimea, much of Central Asia and northern India, and parts of eastern Africa all became new Islamic provinces. In some cases this expansion was the result of conquests, but in others it had been achieved through missionary work.

The immense variety of impulses that affected the Muslim world during these five centuries was one of the causes of the bewildering artistic explosion that also characterizes the middle period. Although much work has been done on individual monuments, scholarship is still in its infancy. It is particularly difficult, therefore, to decide on the appropriate means of organizing this information: by geographical or cultural areas (e.g., Iran, Egypt, Morocco), by individual dynasties (e.g., Seljuqs, Timurids), by periods (e.g., 13th century before the Mongol invasions), or even by social

categories (e.g., the art of princes, the art of cities). Thus, the five following divisions of Fatimid, Seljuq, Western Islamic, Mamluk, and Mongol Iran (Il-Khanid and Timurid) art are partly arbitrary and to a large extent tentative. Their respective importance also varies, for what is known as Seljuq art certainly overwhelms almost all others in its importance.

Fatimid art (909–1171)

The Fatimids were technically an Arab dynasty professing with missionary zeal the beliefs of the Isma'ili sect of the Shi'ite branch of Islam. The dynasty was established in Tunisia and Sicily in 909. In 969 the Fatimids moved to Egypt and founded the city of Cairo. They soon controlled Syria and Palestine. In the latter part of the 11th century, however, the Fatimid empire began to disintegrate internally and externally; the final demise occurred in 1171. But it is not known which of the obvious components of the Fatimid world was more significant in influencing the development of the visual arts: its heterodoxy, its Egyptian location, its missionary relationship with almost all provinces of Islam, or the fact that during its heyday in the 11th century it was the

Bronze griffin, 12th century; in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Pisa, Italy. Scala/Art Resource, New York

only wealthy Islamic centre and could thus easily gather artisans and art objects from all over the world.

Architecture

The great Fatimid mosques of Cairo—al-Azhar (started in 970) and al-Hakim (*c.* 1002–03)—were designed in the traditional hypostyle plan with axial cupolas. It is only in such architectural details as the elaborately composed facade of al-Hakim, with its corner towers and vaulted portal, that innovations appear, for most earlier mosques did not have large formal gates, nor was much attention previously given to the composition of the exterior facade. The Fatimids' architectural traditionalism was certainly a conscious attempt to perpetuate the existing aesthetic system.

Although much less is known about it, the Great Palace of the Fatimids belonged to the tradition of the enormous palace-cities typical of the 'Abbasids. Mediterranean rather than Iranian influences, however, played a greater part in the determination of its uses and functions. The whole city of Cairo (Arabic: al-Qahirah, meaning "the Victorious"), on the other hand, has many symbolic and visual aspects that suggest a willful relationship to Baghdad.

The originality of Fatimid architecture does not lie in works sponsored by the caliphs themselves, even though Cairo's well-preserved gates and walls of the second half of the 11th century are among the best examples of early medieval military architecture. It is rather the patronage of lower officials and of the bourgeoisie, if not even of the humbler classes, that was responsible for the most interesting Fatimid buildings. The mosques of al-Aqmar (1125) and of al-Salih (*c.* 1160) are among the first examples of monumental small mosques constructed to serve local needs. Even though their internal arrangement is quite

traditional, their plans were adapted to the space available in the urban centre. These mosques were elaborately decorated on the exterior, exhibiting a conspicuousness absent from large hypostyle mosques.

A second innovation in Fatimid architecture was the tremendous development of mausoleums. This may be explained partially by Shiʿism's emphasis on the succession of holy men, but the development of these buildings in terms of both quality and quantity indicates that other influential social and religious issues were also involved. Most of the mausoleums were simple square buildings surmounted by a dome. Many of these have survived in Cairo and Aswan. Only a few, such as the *mashhad* at Aswan, are somewhat more elaborate, with side rooms.

The Fatimids introduced, or developed, only two major constructional techniques: the systematization of the four-centred "keel" arch and the squinch. The latter innovation is of greater consequence because the squinch became the most common means of passing from a square to a dome, although pendentives were known as well. A peculiarly Egyptian development was the *muqarnas* squinch, which consisted of four units: a niche bracketed by two niche segments, superimposed with an additional niche. The complex profile of the *muqarnas* became an architectural element in itself used for windows, while the device of using niches and niche segments remained typical of Egyptian decorative design for centuries. It still is impossible to say whether the *muqarnas* was invented in Egypt or inspired by other architectural traditions (most likely Iranian). Fatimid domes were smooth or ribbed and developed a characteristic "keel" profile.

Stone sculpture, stucco work, and carved wood were used for architectural decorations. The Fatimids also employed mosaicists, who mostly worked in places like

Jerusalem, where they imitated or repaired earlier mosaic murals. Many fragments of Fatimid wall paintings have survived in Egypt. Most of them, however, are too small to allow for making any iconographic or stylistic conclusions, with the exception of the mid-12th-century ceiling of the Cappella Palatina at Palermo. Built by the Norman kings of Sicily, the palace chapel was almost certainly decorated by Fatimid artists, or at least the artists adhered to Fatimid models. The hundreds of facets in the *muqarnas* ceiling were painted, notably with many purely ornamental vegetal and zoomorphic designs. Stylistically influenced by Iraqi 'Abbasid art, these paintings are innovative in their more spatially aware representation of personages and of animals. The stunning abstraction of the architectural decoration at Samarra' tends to give way to more naturalistically conceived vegetal and

Ceiling of the Cappella Palatina, Palermo, Sicily. The chapel was built by the Norman kings of Sicily and decorated by Fatimid artists. M. Desjardins/Realities

Coronation mantle of King Roger II of Sicily, gold embroidery and pearls on a red silk ground, 1133; in the Hofburg, Vienna. Courtesy of the Hofburg Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

animal designs; occasionally whole narrative scenes appear carved on wood. Another decorative trend is especially used on 12th-century mihrabs: explicitly complicated geometric patterns, usually based on stars, which in turn generate octagons, hexagons, triangles, and rectangles. Geometry becomes a sort of network in the midst of which small vegetal units continue to remain, often as inlaid pieces. Long inscriptions written in very elaborate calligraphies also became a typical form of architectural decoration.

A clear separation must be made between the decorative arts sought by Fatimid princes and the arts produced within their empire. Little has been preserved of the former, notably a small number of superb ewers in rock crystal. A text has survived, however, that describes the imperial treasures looted in the middle of the 11th century by dissatisfied mercenary troops. It lists gold, silver, enamel, and porcelain objects that have all been lost, as well as textiles. The inventory also records that the

Fatimids had in their possession many works of Byzantine, Chinese, and even Greco-Roman provenance. Altogether, then, it seems that the imperial art of the Fatimids was part of a sort of international royal taste that downplayed cultural or political differences.

Ceramics, on the other hand, were primarily produced by local urban schools and were not an imperial art. The most celebrated type of Fatimid wares were lustre-painted ceramics from Egypt itself. A large number of artisans' names have been preserved, thereby indicating the growing prestige of these craftsmen and the aesthetic importance of their pottery. Most of the surviving lustre ceramics are plates on which the decoration of the main surface has been emphasized. The decorative themes used were quite varied and included all the traditional Islamic ones: e.g., calligraphy, vegetal and animal motifs, arabesques. The most distinguishing feature of these Fatimid ceramics, however, is the representation of the human figure. Some of these ceramics have been decorated with simplified copies of illustrations of the princely themes, but others have depictions of scenes of Egyptian daily life.

Book Illustration

Manifestations of nonprincely Fatimid art also included the art of book illustration. The few remaining fragments illustrate that probably after the middle of the 11th century there developed an art of representation other than the style used to illustrate princely themes. This was a more illusionistic style that still accompanied the traditional ornamental one in the same manner as in the paintings on ceramics.

In summary it would appear that Fatimid art was a curiously transitional one. Although much influenced by earlier Islamic and non-Islamic Mediterranean styles, the Fatimids devised new structural systems and developed

a new manner of painting representational subjects, which became characteristic of all Muslim art during the 12th century.

Seljuq Art

During the last decades of the 10th century, at the Central Asian frontiers of Islam, a migratory movement of Turkic peoples began that was to affect the whole Muslim world up to and including Egypt. The dominant political force among these peoples was the dynasty of the Seljuqs, but it was not the only one; nor can it be demonstrated, as far as the arts are concerned, that it was the major source of patronage in the period to be discussed anywhere but in Anatolia in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Seljuq empire, therefore, consisted of a succession of dynasties, and all but one (the Ayyubids of Syria, Egypt, and northern Mesopotamia) were Turkic.

A complex feudal system was established and centred on urban areas. Cities were established or expanded, particularly in western Iran, Anatolia, and Syria. Militant Muslims, the Seljuqs also sought to revive Muslim orthodoxy. Although politically unruly and complicated in their relationships to one another, the successive and partly overlapping dynasties of the Ghaznavids, Ghurids, the Great Seljuqs, Qarakhanids, Zangids, Ayyubids, Seljuqs of Rum, and Khwarezm-Shahs (considering only the major ones) seem to have created a comparatively unified culture from India to Egypt. The art of the Seljuq period, however, is difficult to discuss coherently both because of the wealth of examples and because of the lack of synchronization between various technical and regional developments. This complex world fell apart under the impact of the Mongol invasions that, from 1220 until 1260, swept through the Muslim lands of the Near East.

Characteristic Architectural Forms

The functions of monumental architecture in the Seljuq period were considerably modified. Large congregational mosques were still built. The earliest Seljuq examples occur in the two major new provinces of Islam—Anatolia and northwestern India—as well as in the established Muslim region of western Iran. In some areas, such as the Esfahan region, congregational mosques were rebuilt, while in other parts of Islam, such as Syria or Egypt, where there was no need for new large mosques, older ones were repaired and small ones were built.

A curious side aspect of the program of building, rebuilding, or decorating mosques was the extraordinary development of minarets. Particularly in Iran, dozens of minarets are preserved from the 12th and 13th centuries, while the mosques to which they had been attached have disappeared. It is as though the visual function of the minaret was more important than the religious institution to which it was attached.

Small or large, mausoleums increased in numbers and became at this time the ubiquitous monument they appear to be. Most of the mausoleums, such as the tomb tower of Abu Yazid al-Bistami at Bastam, were dedicated to holy men—both contemporary Muslim saints and all sorts of holy men dead for centuries (even pre-Islamic holy men, especially biblical prophets, acquired a monument). The most impressive mausoleums, however, ones like the one of Sanjar at Merv, were built for royalty. Pilgrimages were organized and in many places hardly mentioned until then as holy places (e.g., Meshed, Bastam, Mosul, Aleppo); a whole monastic establishment serving as a centre for the distribution of alms was erected with hostels and kitchens for the pilgrims.

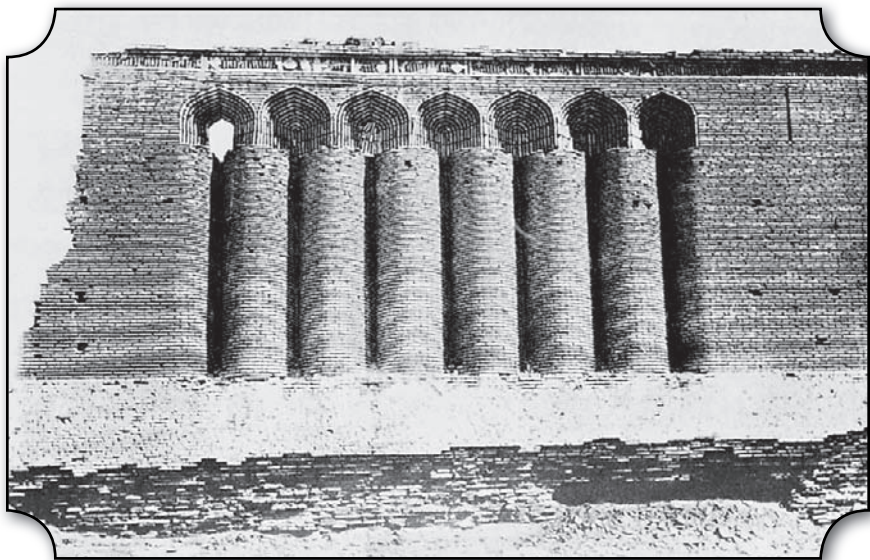
Although enormously expanded, mosques, minarets, and mausoleums were not new types of Islamic architecture. The madrasah, however, was a new building type. There is much controversy as to why and how it really developed. Although early examples have been discovered in Iran, such as the 11th-century madrasah of Khargird in Iran and at Samarkand, it is from Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt that most of the information about the madrasah has been derived. In the latter regions it was usually a privately endowed establishment reserved for one or two of the schools of jurisprudence of orthodox Islam. It had to have rooms for teaching and living quarters for the students and professors. Often the tomb of the founder was attached to the madrasah.

An impressive development of secular architecture occurred under the Seljuqs. The most characteristic building of the time was the citadel, or urban fortress, through which the new princes controlled the usually alien city they held in fief. The largest citadels, like those of Cairo and Aleppo, were whole cities with palaces, mosques, sanctuaries, and baths. Others, like the Citadel of Damascus, were simpler constructions. Occasionally, as in the Euphrates valley, single

Tomb tower at the shrine of Abu Yazid al-Bistami at Bastam, Iran, 1313. Josephine Powell, Rome

castles were built, possibly in imitation of those constructed by the Christian Crusaders. Walls surrounded most cities, and all of them were built or rebuilt during the Seljuq period.

Little is known about Seljuq palaces or private residences in general. In Afghanistan and Central Asia, however, excavations at Tirmidh, Lashkari Bazar, and Ghazni brought to light a whole group of large royal palaces erected in the 11th and early 12th centuries.

Commercial architecture became very important. Individual princes and cities probably were trying to attract business by erecting elaborate caravansaries on the main trade routes such as Ribat-i Malik built between Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan. The most spectacular caravansaries were built in the 13th century in

Brickwork facade of the 11th-century caravansary Ribat-i Malik, Uzbekistan. Courtesy of the General Direction of Museums and Historical Monuments, Ministry of Culture and Arts, Tehran, Iran

Anatolia. Equally impressive, however, although less numerous, are the caravansaries erected in eastern Iran and northern Iraq.

The forms of architecture developed by the Seljuqs were remarkably numerous. Since the Iranian innovations dating from the 11th century and first half of the 12th century are the earliest, they will be discussed first.

Architecture in Iran

Even though it is not entirely typical, the justly celebrated Great Mosque of Esfahan was one of the most influential of all early Seljuq religious structures. Probably completed about 1130 after a long and complicated history of rebuildings, it consisted of a large courtyard on which opened four large vaulted halls known as *eyvan*s; the *eyvan*s created the compositional axes of each side of the court. On the side of the *qiblah* the hall of the main *eyvan* was followed by a huge cupola. The area between *eyvan*s was subdivided into a large number of square bays covered by domes. The Esfahan mosque also had a unique feature: on the north side a single domed hall positioned on the main axis of the building was in all probability a formal hall for princes to change their clothes before entering into the sanctuary of the mosque.

The two features of the Great Mosque at Esfahan that became characteristic of Seljuq mosques were the *eyvan* and the dome. The *eyvan* was not restricted to just mosques, but it also appears in palaces (Lashkari Bazar), caravansaries (Rebat-e Sharaf), and in madrasahs. The *eyvan* was, in other words, a unit of architectural composition that had no specific use and, therefore, no meaning. In the mosques of the 12th century, often four *eyvan*s were used. This kind of composition had two principal effects. One was to make the courtyard the centre of the

building. The other was that it broke up into four areas what had for centuries been a characteristic of the mosque: its single, unified space.

Whether large or small, cupolas or domes were used in mosques, caravansaries, and palaces. They were the main architectural features of almost all mausoleums, where they were set over circular or polygonal rooms.

Two characteristic Iranian architectural forms are not present in the Great Mosque of Esfahan but occur elsewhere in the city. One is the tower, sometimes in the form of a minaret, and the other, which exists only in Esfahan in a much-damaged state, is the *pishtaq*, or a formal gateway that served to emphasize a building's presence and importance.

The minaret of Jam, Afghanistan, 1116–1202. Roland and Sabrina Michaud—Rapho/Photo Researchers

Domes and *eyvan*s indicate the central concern of Iranian construction during the Seljuq period: vaulting in baked brick became the main vehicle for any monumental construction (mud brick was used for secondary parts of a building, frequently for certain secular structures). A large and forcefully composed octagonal base developed the *muqarnas* squinch from a purely ornamental feature into one wherein both structural and decorative functions combined. In some later buildings, such as the mausoleum of Sanjar at Merv, a system of ribs was used to vault an octagonal zone. Seljuq architects sought to make their domes visible from afar and for this reason invented the double dome. Its outer shell was raised on a high drum, while the interior kept the traditional sequence: square base, zone of transition, and dome. Using this structural device, therefore, exterior height was achieved without making the exterior dome too heavy and without complicating the task of decorating the interior, always a problem in countries like Iran with limited supplies of wood for scaffolding.

Architectural decoration was intimately tied to structure. Two mediums predominated. One was stucco, which continued to be used to cover large wall surfaces. The other was brick. Originating in the 10th-century architecture of northeastern Iran, brick came to be employed as a medium of construction as well as a medium of decoration. The complex decorative designs worked out in brick often had a rigidly geometric effect. Especially cut shapes of terra-cotta and brick, frequently produced in unusual sizes, served to soften these geometric patterns by modifying their tactile impact and by introducing additional curved or beveled lines to the straight lines of geometry.

Most of the decorative designs tended to be subordinated to geometry, and even calligraphic or vegetal patterns were affected by a seemingly mathematically controlled aesthetic. It has been suggested that these

complex geometric designs were a result of an almost mystical passion for number theories that were popularized in 11th-century Iran by such persons as the scholar and scientist al-Biruni or the poet-mathematician Omar Khayyam. But even if the impulses for geometric design were originally created at the highest intellectual level, the designs themselves rapidly became automatic patterns.

Architecture in Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia

In Iraq, northern Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt (after 1171), the architectural monuments do not, on the whole, appear as overwhelmingly impressive as those of Iran, largely because the taste of Umayyad and ʿAbbasid times continued to dominate mosque architecture. It is in the construction of new building types, particularly the madrasah, as mentioned previously, that the most originality is apparent.

The main achievement of Ayyubid, Zangid, or Seljuq architecture in the Fertile Crescent was the translating into stone of new structural systems first developed in brick. The most impressive instance of this lies in the technically complex *muqarnas* domes and half domes or in the *muqarnas* pendentives of Syrian buildings. Elaborate mihrabs were also made of multicoloured stones that were carefully cut to create impressive patterns. The architecture of the Fertile Crescent, therefore, was still dominated by the sheer force of stone as a material for both construction as well as decoration, and therefore the architecture of these regions was more Mediterranean in effect than was that of Iran.

This somewhat Mediterranean tendency was also evident in the 13th-century architecture of Seljuq Anatolia (now part of Turkey). This new province of Islam was rapidly populated with new immigrants and consequently

gathered themes and motifs from throughout the Muslim world, as well as from the several native Anatolian traditions of Byzantine, Armenian, and Georgian architecture. The resulting assimilation of styles produced an overwhelmingly original architecture, for each building in Konya, Kayseri, Sivas, Divrigi, Erzurum, or on the roads between them is a unique monument.

Functionally the buildings in Anatolia do not differ from those in other parts of the Muslim world. All the structural forms found in Syria and Iran can be found in Anatolia as well, although they have often been adapted to local materials. Three uniquely Anatolian architectural features, however, can be distinguished. One was limited to Konya at this time but would have an important widespread development later on. As it appears in the Ince or Karatay medreses (madrasahs), it consists of the transformation of the central courtyard into a domed space while maintaining the *eyvan*. Thus the centralized aspect of the *eyvan* plan becomes architec-

"Facade of the main portal of Ince Minare at Konya, Tur., 1258, showing its sculptural ornamentation and (right) the decorative brickwork of the minaret." Ara Guler, Istanbul

turally explicit. The second feature is the creation of a facade that usually consisted of a high central portal—often framed by two minarets—with an elaborately sculpted decorative composition that extended to two corner towers. The third distinguishing feature of Anatolian Seljuq architecture is the complexity of the types of funerary monuments that were constructed.

From the point of view of construction, most of Anatolian architecture is of stone. In Konya and a number of eastern Anatolian instances, brick was used. Barrel vaults, groin vaults, *muqarnas* vaults, squinch domes, pendentive domes, and the new pendentive known as "Turkish triangle" (a transformation of the curved space of the traditional pendentive into a fanlike set of long and narrow triangles built at an angle from each other) were all used by Anatolian builders, thereby initiating the great development of vault construction in Ottoman architecture.

Architectural decoration consisted primarily in the stone sculpture found on the facades of religious and secular buildings. Most Anatolian themes were original, although some exhibit Armenian and possibly Western influences. In addition to the traditional geometric, epigraphic, and vegetal motifs, a decorative sculpture in the round or in high relief was created that included many representations of human figures and especially animals.

In summing up the architectural development of the Seljuq period, three points seem to be particularly significant. One is the expansion of building typology and the erection of new monumental architectural forms, thus illustrating an expansion of patronage and a growing complexity of taste. The second point is that, regardless of the quality and interest of monuments in the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, and Anatolia, the most inventive and exciting architecture in the 11th and 12th centuries was that of Iran. But, far more than

in the preceding period, regional needs and regional characteristics seem to predominate over synchronic and pan-Islamic ones. Finally, there was a striking growth of architectural decoration both in sophistication of design and in variation of technique.

Other Arts

Although probably not as varied as architecture, the other arts of the Seljuq period also underwent tremendous changes. Glass and textiles continued to be major mediums during the Seljuq period. Ceramics underwent many changes, especially in Iran, where lustre painting became widespread and where new techniques were developed for colouring pottery. Furthermore, the growth of tile decoration created a new dimension for the art of ceramics.

Inlaid metalwork became an important technique. First produced at Herat in Iran (now in Afghanistan) in the middle of the 12th century, this type of decoration spread westward, and a series of local schools were established in various regions of the Seljuq domain. In this technique, the surfaces of utilitarian metallic objects (candlesticks, ewers, basins, kettles, and so forth) were engraved, and then silver was inlaid in the cut-out areas to make the decorative design more clearly visible.

Manuscript illustration also became an important art. Scientific books, including the medical manuals of Dioscorides and of Galen, or literary texts such as the picaresque adventures of a verbal genius known as the *Maqamat*, were produced with narrative illustrations throughout the text.

All of the technical novelties of the Seljuqs seem to have had one main purpose: to animate objects and books and to provide them with clearly visible and identifiable images. Even the austere art of calligraphy became occasionally animated with letters ending in human figures.

The main centres for producing these arts were located in Iran and the Fertile Crescent. It would seem from a large number of art objects whose patrons are known that the main market for these works of art was the mercantile bourgeoisie of the big cities and not the princes. Seljuq decorative arts and book illustration, therefore, reflect an urban taste. The themes and motifs used were particularly numerous. In books they tend to be illustrations of the text, even if a manuscript such as the Schefer *Maqamat* (1237) sought to combine a strict narrative with a fairly naturalistic panorama of contemporary life.

Discussion near a village, from the 43rd maqamah *of the* Maqamat *("Assemblies") of al-Hariri, miniature painted by Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti, 1237; in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.* Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

The main identifiable group of miniature painters was the so-called Baghdad school of the first half of the 13th century. The group should be called the Arab school because the subject matter and style employed could have been identified with any one of the major artistic centres of Egypt and the Fertile Crescent. The miniatures painted by these artists are characterized by the colourful and often humorous way in which the urban-

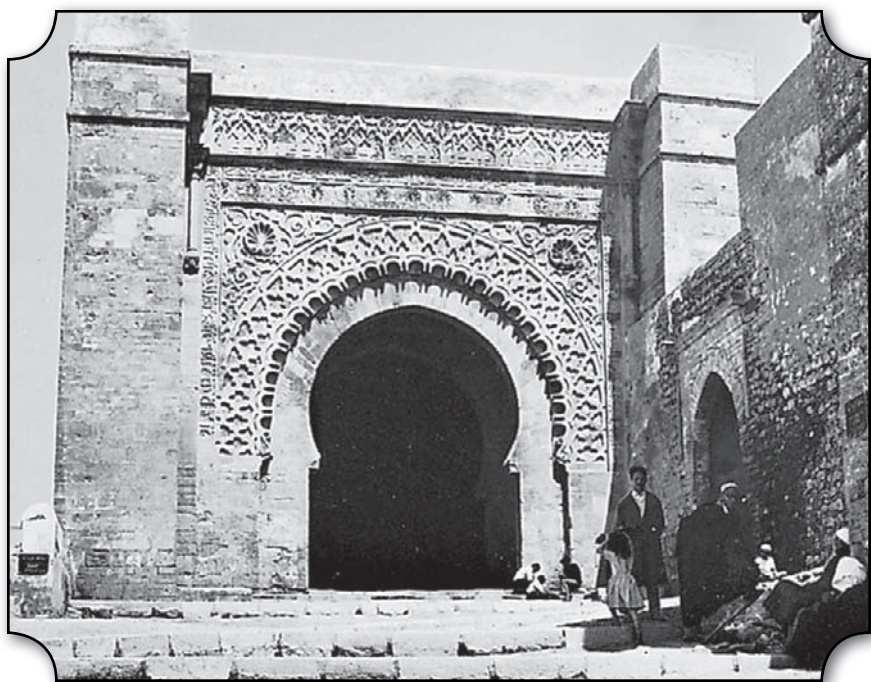
Drawing from a manuscript of the Maqamat, *1323; in the British Museum (MS. Add 7293, f. 285v)*. Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum

ized Arab is depicted. The compositions, often lacking in any strong aesthetic intent, are documentary caricatures in which the artist has recorded the telling and recognizable gesture or a known and common setting or activity. In many images or compositional devices one can recognize the impact of the richer Christian Mediterranean tradition of manuscript illumination.

Western Islamic Art: Moorish

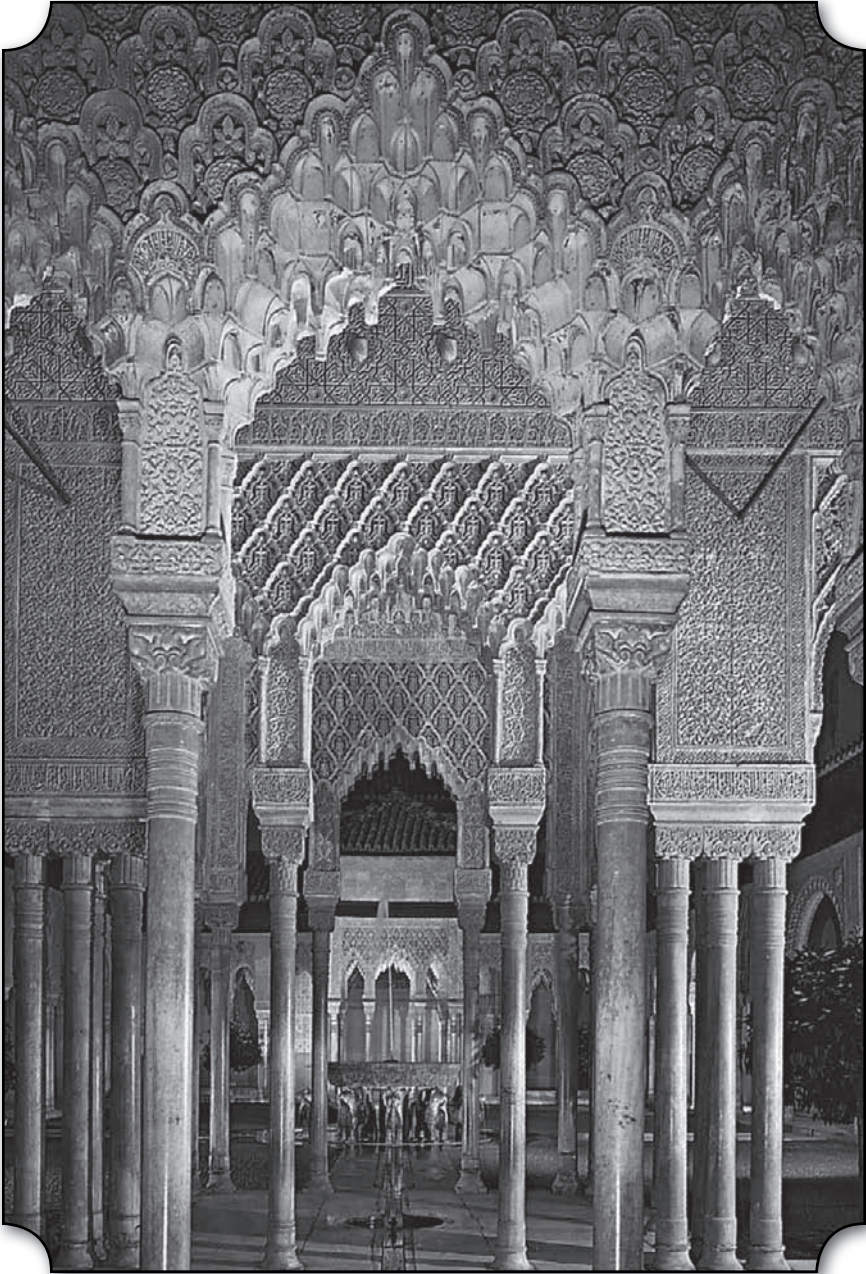
The 11th to 13th centuries were not peaceful in the Maghrib. Amazigh (Berber) dynasties overthrew each

other in Morocco and the Iberian Peninsula. The Christian reconquest gradually diminished Muslim holdings in Spain and Portugal, and Tunisia was ruined during the Hilali invasion when Bedouin tribes were sent by the Fatimids to prevent local independence.

Two types of structures characterize the Almoravid (1056–1147) and Almohad (1130–1269) periods in Morocco and Spain. One comprises the large, severely designed Moroccan mosques such as those of Tinmel, of Hasan in Rabat, or of the Kutubiyyah (Koutoubia) in Marrakech. They are all austere hypostyles with tall, massive, square minarets. The other distinctive type of architecture was that built for military purposes, including fortifications and, especially, massive city gates with low-slung horseshoe

The Rabat Gate, Marrakech, Mor., late 12th century, Almoravid period. Josephine Powell, Rome

arches, such as the Oudaia Gate at Rabat (12th century) or the Rabat Gate at Marrakech (12th century). Palaces built in central Algeria by minor dynasties such as the Zirids were more in the Fatimid tradition of Egypt than in the Almoravid and Almohad traditions of western Islam. Very little is known or has been studied about North African arts other than architecture because the Amazigh dynasties did not foster the arts of luxury.

In North Africa the artistic milieu did not change much in the 14th and 15th centuries. Hypostyle mosques such as the Great Mosque of Algiers continued to be built; madrasahs were constructed with more elaborate plans; the Bu ʻInaniyah madrasah at Fès is one of the few monumental buildings of the period. A few mausoleums were erected such as the so-called Marinid tombs near Fès (second half of the 14th century) or the complex of Chella at Rabat (mostly 14th century). Architectural decoration in stucco or sculpted stone was usually limited to elaborate geometric patterns, epigraphic themes, and a few vegetal motifs.

A stunning exception to the austerity of North African architecture exists in Spain in the Alhambra palace complex at Granada. The hill site of the Alhambra had been occupied by a citadel and possibly by a palace since the 11th century, but little of these earlier constructions has remained. In the 14th century two successive princes, Yusuf I and Muhammad V, transformed the hill into their official residence. Outside of a number of gates built like triumphal arches and several ruined forecourts, only three parts of the palace remain intact. First there is the long Court of the Myrtles leading to the huge Hall of Ambassadors located in one of the exterior towers. This was the part of the Alhambra built by Yusuf I. Then there is the Court of the Lions, with its celebrated lion fountain in the centre. Numerous rooms open off this court,

Court of the Lions, Alhambra, Granada, Spain, 14th century. Raffaello Bencini—Scala/Art Resource, New York

including the elaborately decorated Hall of the Two Sisters and the Hall of the Abencerrajes. The third part, slightly earlier than the first two, is the Generalife; it is a summer residence built higher up the hill and surrounded by gardens with fountains, pavilions, and portico walks.

The Alhambra is especially important because it is one of the few palaces to have survived from medieval Islamic times. It illustrates superbly a number of architectural concerns occasionally documented in literary references: the contrast between an unassuming exterior and a richly decorated interior to achieve an effect of secluded or private brilliance; the constant presence of water, either as a single, static basin or as a dynamic fountain; the inclusion of oratories and baths; the lack of an overall plan (the units are simply attached to each other).

The architectural decoration of the Alhambra was mostly of stucco. Some of it is flat, but the extraordinarily complex cupolas of *muqarnas*, such as in the Hall of the Two Sisters, appear as huge multifaceted diadems. The decoration of the Alhambra becomes a sort of paradox as well as a tour de force. Weighty, elaborately decorated ceilings, for example, are supported by frail columns or by walls pierced with many windows (light permeates almost every part of the large, domed halls). Much of the design and decoration of the Alhambra is symbolically oriented. The poems that adorn the Alhambra as calligraphic ornamentation celebrate its cupolas as domes of heaven rotating around the prince sitting under them. Islamic art as such ceased to be produced in Spain after 1492, when Granada, the last Moorish kingdom in Spain, fell to the Christians.

Most of the best known monuments of western Islamic art are buildings, although a very original calligraphy was developed. The other arts cannot be compared in wealth and importance either with what occurred elsewhere in

Islam at the same time or with earlier objects created in Spain. There are some important examples of metalwork, wood inlaid with ivory, and a lustre-glaze pottery known as Hispano-Moresque ware. The fact that the latter was made in Valencia or Málaga after the termination of Muslim rule demonstrates that Islamic traditions in the decorative arts continued to be adhered to, if only partially. The term Mudéjar, therefore, is used to refer to all the things made in a Muslim style but under Christian rule. Numerous examples of Mudéjar art exist in ceramics and textiles, as well as in architectural monuments such as the synagogues of Toledo and the Alcazba in Sevilla (Seville), where even the name of the ruling Christian prince, Don Pedro, was written in Arabic letters. The Mudéjar spirit, in fact, permeated most of Spanish architectural ornament and decorative arts for centuries, and its influence can even be found in Spanish America.

Mudéjar art must be carefully distinguished from Mozarabic art: the art of Christians under Muslim rule. Mozarabic art primarily flourished in Spain during the earlier periods of Muslim rule. Its major manifestations are architectural decorations, decorative objects, and illuminated manuscripts.

Mamluk Art

The Mamluks were originally white male slaves, chiefly Turks and Circassians from the Caucasus and Central Asia, who formed the mercenary army of the various feudal states of Syria and Egypt. During the 13th century the importance of this military caste grew as the older feudal order weakened and military commanders took over power generally as nonhereditary sultans. They succeeded in arresting the Mongol onslaught in 1260 and, through a

judicious but complicated system of alliance with the urban elite class, managed to maintain themselves in power in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria until 1517.

During the Mamluk period Egypt and Syria were rich commercial emporiums. This wealth explains the quality and quantity of Mamluk art. Most of the existing monuments in the old quarters of Cairo, Damascus, Tripoli, and Aleppo are Mamluk; in Jerusalem almost everything visible on the Haram al-Sharif, outside the Dome of the Rock, is Mamluk. Museum collections of Islamic art generally abound with Mamluk metalwork and glass. Some of the oldest remaining carpets are Mamluk. This creativity required, of course, more than wealth; it also required a certain will to transform wealth into art. This will was in part the desire of parvenu rulers and their cohorts to be remembered. Furthermore, architectural patronage flourished because of the institutionalization of the *waqf*, an economic system in which investments made for holy purposes were inalienable. This law allowed the wealthy to avoid confiscation of their properties at the whim of the caliph by investing their funds in religious institutions. In the Mamluk period, therefore, there was a multiplication of madrasahs, *khanqahs*, *ribats*, and *masjids*, often with tombs of founders attached to them. The Mamluk establishment also repaired and kept up all the institutions, religious or secular, that had been inherited by them, as can be demonstrated by the well-documented repairs carried on in Jerusalem and Damascus.

Architecture

Although Mamluk architecture was essentially conservative in its development of building types, more originality is evident in the constructional systems used, although traditional structural features continued to be employed.

The courtyard of the madrasah of Sultan Hasan, Cairo, 1356–62. GEKS

The main innovations are of three kinds. First, minarets became particularly elaborate and, toward the end of the period, almost absurd in their ornamentation. Facades were huge, with overwhelming portals 25 to 35 feet (7 to 11 metres) high.

A second characteristically Mamluk feature was technical virtuosity in stone construction. At times this led to a superb purity of form, as in the Gate of the Cotton Merchants in Jerusalem or the complex of the Barquq mosque in Cairo. At other times, as in the Mamluk architecture of Baybars and Qa'it Bay, there was an almost wild playfulness with forms. Another aspect of Mamluk masonry was the alternation of stones of different colours to provide variations on the surfaces of buildings.

The Mamluks created a monumental setting for Syria and Egypt that lasted until the 20th century. It was at its most remarkable in architecture, and nearly 3,000 major monuments have been preserved or are known from texts in cities from the Euphrates to Cairo. There were only minor modifications in the typology of architecture, and even the 15th-century buildings with interiors totally covered with ornamentation have possible prototypes in the

architecture of the Seljuqs. Yet there are formal and functional features that do distinguish Mamluk buildings. One is the tendency to build structures of different functions in a complex or cluster. Thus the Qala'un mosque (1284–85) in Cairo has a mausoleum, a madrasah, and a hospital erected as one architectural unit. Another characteristic is the tendency of Mamluk patrons to build their major monuments near each other. As a result, certain streets of Cairo, such as Bayn al-Qasrayn, became galleries of architectural masterpieces.

The third element of change in Mamluk art was perhaps the most important: almost all formal artistic

Mamluk tombs, Cairo, 14th–15th centuries. H. Roger-Viollet

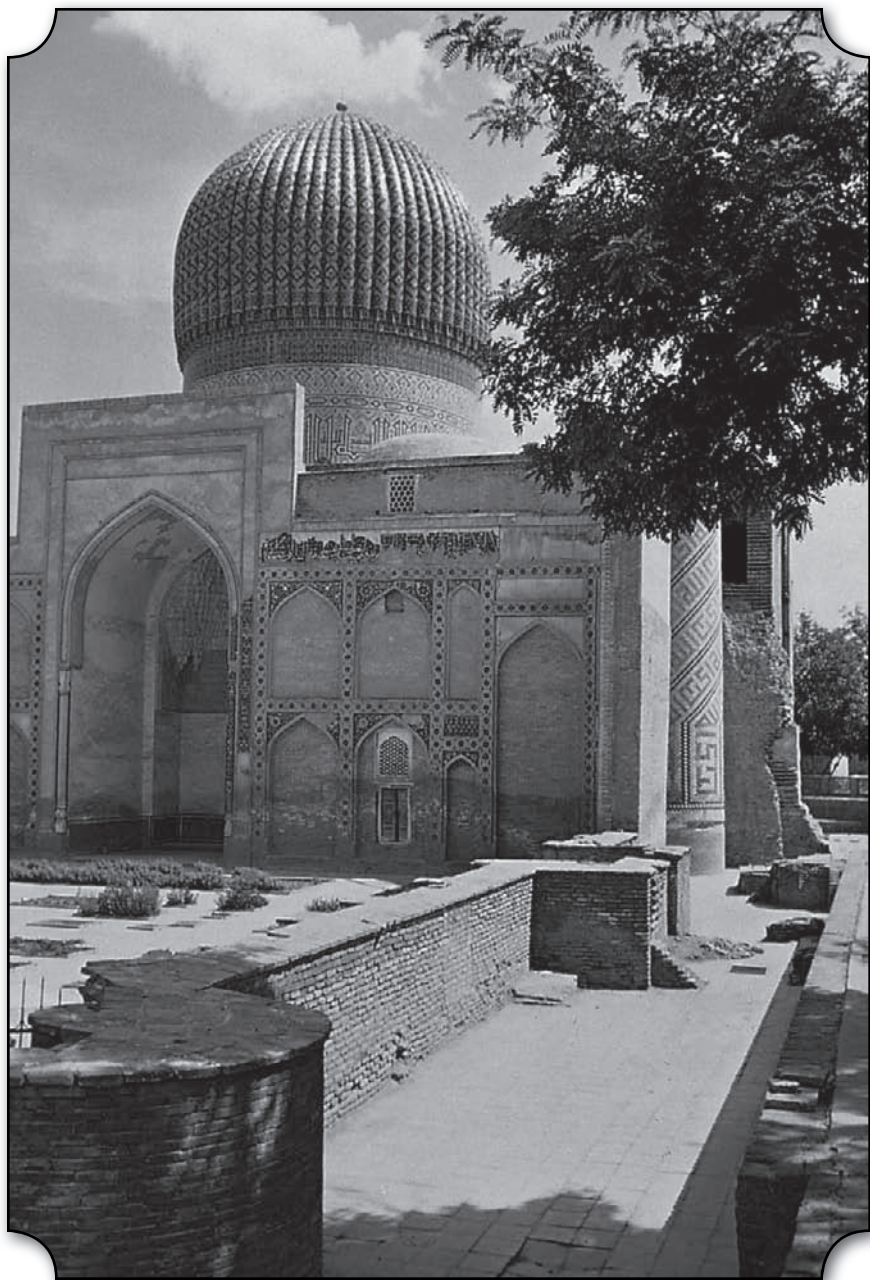
achievements rapidly became part of the common vocabulary of the whole culture, thus ensuring high quality of construction and decorative technique throughout the period.

With the exception of portals and *qiblah* walls, architectural decoration was usually subordinated to the architectural elements of the design. Generally the material of construction (usually stone) was carved with ornamental motifs.

Other Arts

Like architecture, the other arts of the Mamluk period achieved a high level of technical perfection but were often lacking in originality. The so-called Baptistère de Saint Louis (*c.* 1310) is the most impressive example of inlaid metalwork preserved from this period. Several Mamluk illustrated manuscripts, such as the *Maqamat* (1334), display an amazing ornamental sense in the use of colour on gold backgrounds. Mamluk mosque lamps provide some of the finest examples of medieval glass. None of these examples, however, exhibits much inventiveness of design.

Mongol Iran: Il-Khanid and Timurid Periods

Seen from the vantage point of contemporary or later chronicles, the 13th century in Iran was a period of destructive wars and invasions. Such cities as Balkh, Nishapur, or Rayy, which had been centres of Islamic culture for nearly six centuries, were eradicated as the Mongol army swept through Iran. The turning point toward some sort of stability took place in 1295 with the accession of Mahmud Ghazan to the Mongol throne. Under him and his successors (the Il-Khan dynasty), order was reestablished throughout Iran, and cities in northeastern Iran,

The Gur-e Amir (mausoleum of Timur), Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Alex Langley/Photo Researchers

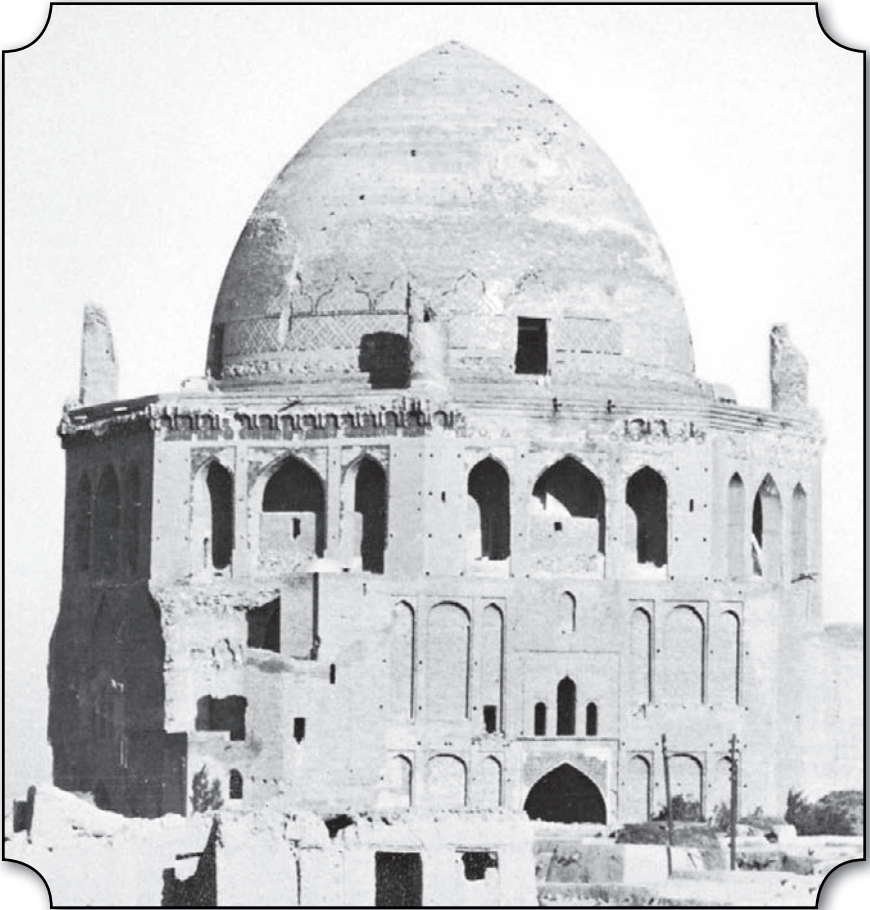
especially Tabriz and Soltaniyeh, became the main creative centres of the new Mongol regime. At Tabriz, for example, the Rashidiyeh (a sort of academy of sciences and arts to which books, scholars, and ideas from all over the world were collected) was established in the early 14th century.

Existing under the Mongol rulers were a number of secondary dynasties that flourished in various provinces of Iran: the Jalayirid dynasty, centred in Baghdad, controlled most of western Iran; the Mozaffarid dynasty of southwestern Iran contained the cities of Esfahan, Yazd, and Shiraz; and the Karts reigned in Khorasan. Until the last decade of the 14th century, however, all the major cultural centres were in western Iran. Under Timur (1336–1405; the Timurid dynasty) and his successors, however, northeastern Iran, especially the cities of Samarkand and Herat, became focal points of artistic and intellectual activity. But Timurid culture affected the whole of Iran either directly or through minor local dynasties. Many Timurid monuments, therefore, are found in western or southern Iran.

Architecture

Stylistically, Il-Khanid architecture is defined best by buildings such as the mosque of Varamin (1322–26) and the mausoleums at Sarakhs, Merv, Rad-Kan, and Maragheh. In all of these examples, the elements of architectural composition, decoration, and construction that had been developed earlier were refined by Il-Khanid architects. *Eyvan*s were shallower but better integrated with the courts; facades were more thoughtfully composed; the *muqarnas* became more linear and varied; and coloured tiles were used to enhance the building's character.

The architectural masterpiece of the Il-Khanid period is the mausoleum of Öljeitü at Soltaniyeh. With its double system of galleries, eight minarets, large blue-tiled dome, and

an interior measuring 80 feet (25 metres), it is clear that the building was intended to be imposing. Il-Khanid attention to impressiveness of scale also accounted for the ʿAli Shah mosque in Tabriz, whose *eyvan* measuring 150 by 80 by 100 feet (45 by 25 by 30 metres) was meant to be the largest ever built. The *eyvan* vault collapsed almost immediately after it had been constructed, but its walls, 35 feet (10 metres) thick, remain as a symbol of the grandiose taste of the Il-Khanids.

Mausoleum of Öljeitü at Soltaniyeh, Iran, 1305–13, Il-Khanid period. Josephine Powell, Rome

The Timurid period began architecturally in 1390 with the sanctuary of Ahmad Yasavi in Turkistan. Between 1390 and the last works of Sultan Husayn Bayqara almost a century later, hundreds of buildings were constructed at Herat, many of which have been preserved, although few have been studied except by Central Asian scholars. The most spectacular examples of Timurid architecture are found in Samarkand, Herat, Meshed, Khargird, Tayabad, Baku, and Tabriz, although important Timurid structures were also erected in southern Iran.

Architectural projects were well patronized by the Timurids as a means to commemorate their respective reigns. Every ruler or local governor constructed his own sanctuaries, mosques, and, especially, memorial buildings dedicated to holy men of the past. While the Shah-e Zendah in Samarkand—a long street of mausoleums comparable to the Mamluk cemetery of Cairo—is perhaps the most accessible of the sites of Timurid commemorative architecture, more spectacular ones are to be seen at Meshed, Torbat-e Sheykh Jam, and Mazar-e Sharif.

Major Timurid buildings, such as the so-called mosque of Bibi Khanom, the Gur-e Amir mausoleum, the mosque of Gowhar Shad in Meshed, or the madrasahs at Khargird and Herat, are all characterized by strong axial symmetry. Often the facade on the inner court repeats the design of the outer facade, and minarets are used to frame the composition. Changes took place in the technique of dome construction. The *muqarnas* was not entirely abandoned but was often replaced by a geometrically rigorous net of intersecting arches that could be adapted to various shapes by modifying the width or span of the dome.

In the Timurid period the use of colour in architecture reached a high point. Every architectural unit was divided, on both the exterior and interior, into panels of brilliantly

coloured tiles that sometimes were mixed with stucco or terra-cotta architectural decorations.

Painting

A new period of Persian painting began in the Mongol era, and, even though here and there one can recognize the impact of Seljuq painting, on the whole it is a limited one. Although the new style was primarily expressed in miniature painting, it is known from literary sources that mural painting flourished as well. Masterpieces of Persian literature were illustrated: first the *Shah-nameh* ("Book of Kings") by the 11th-century poet Ferdowsi and then, from the second half of the 14th century, lyrical and mystical works, primarily those by the 12th-century poet Nezami. Historical texts or chronicles such as the *Jami' al-tawarikh*

Mongol warriors, miniature from Rashid al-Din's History of the World*, 1307; in the Edinburgh University Library, Scotland.* Courtesy of the Edinburgh University Library, Scotland

("Universal History of Rashid al-Din") were also illustrated, especially in the early Mongol period.

The first major monument of Persian painting in the Mongol period is a group of manuscripts of the *Jami' al-tawarikh*. The miniatures are historical narrative scenes. Stylistically they are related to Chinese painting—an influence introduced by the Mongols during the Il-Khanid period.

Chinese influence can still be discovered in the masterpiece of 14th-century Persian painting, the so-called Demotte *Shah-nameh*. Illustrated between 1320 and 1360, its 56 preserved miniatures have been dispersed all

Bahram Gur killing a dragon, illustration from the Shah-nameh *("Book of Kings") of Ferdowsi, known as the Demotte* Shah-nameh, *1320–60, from Tabriz, Iran; in the Cleveland Museum of Art.* Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, Grace Rainey Rogers Fund

over the world. Its main importance lies in its being the earliest known illustrative work to depict in a strikingly dramatic fashion the meaning of the Iranian epic. Its battle scenes, its descriptions of fights with monsters, its enthronement scenes are all powerful representations of the colourful and often cruel legend of Iranian kingship.

The Demotte *Shah-nameh* is but the most remarkable of a whole series of 14th-century manuscripts, all of which suggest an art of painting in search of a coherent style.

Diwan *of Sultan Ahmad, pastoral border painted by Junayd,* c. *1405, from Baghdad; in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.* Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

A more organized and stylistically coherent period in Persian painting began about 1396 with the Khwaju Kermani manuscript and culminated between 1420 and 1440 in the paintings produced by the Herat school, where the emperor Baysunqur created an academy in which classical Iranian literature was codified, copied, and illustrated. Although several *Shah-namehs* are known from this time, the mood of these manuscripts is no longer epic but lyrical. Puppet-like figures almost unemotionally engage in a variety of activities always set in an idealized garden or

Prince Humay at the Gate of Humayun's Castle, *miniature painted by Junayd for the* Khamseh *of Khwaju Kermani, 1396; in the British Library (MS. Add 18113, folio 18v). 29 × 20.2 cm.* By permission of the British Library

palace depicted against a rich gold background. It is a world of sensuous pleasure that also embodies the themes of a mystically interpreted lyrical poetry, for what is represented is not the real world but a divine paradise in the guise of a royal palace or garden. These miniatures easily became clichés, for later artists endlessly repeated stereotyped formulas. But at its best this style of Persian painting succeeds in defining something more than mere ornamental colourfulness.

Another major change in Persian painting occurred during the second half of the 15th century at Herat under Husayn Bayqara. This change is associated with the first major painter of Islamic art, Behzad. This artist's interest in observing his environment resulted in the introduction of more realistic poses and the introduction of numerous details of daily life or genre elements. His works also reflect a concern for a psychological interpretation of the scenes and events depicted.

Persian art of the Mongol period differs in a very important way from any of the other traditions of the middle period of Islamic art. Even though Iran, like all other areas at that time, was not ethnically homogeneous, its art tended to be uniquely "national." In architecture nationalism was mostly a matter of function, for during this period the Shiʿites grew in importance, and new monumental settings were required for their holy places. Iranian individualism is especially apparent in painting, in which Chinese and other foreign styles were consistently adapted to express intensely Iranian subjects, thereby creating a uniquely Persian style.

LATE PERIOD

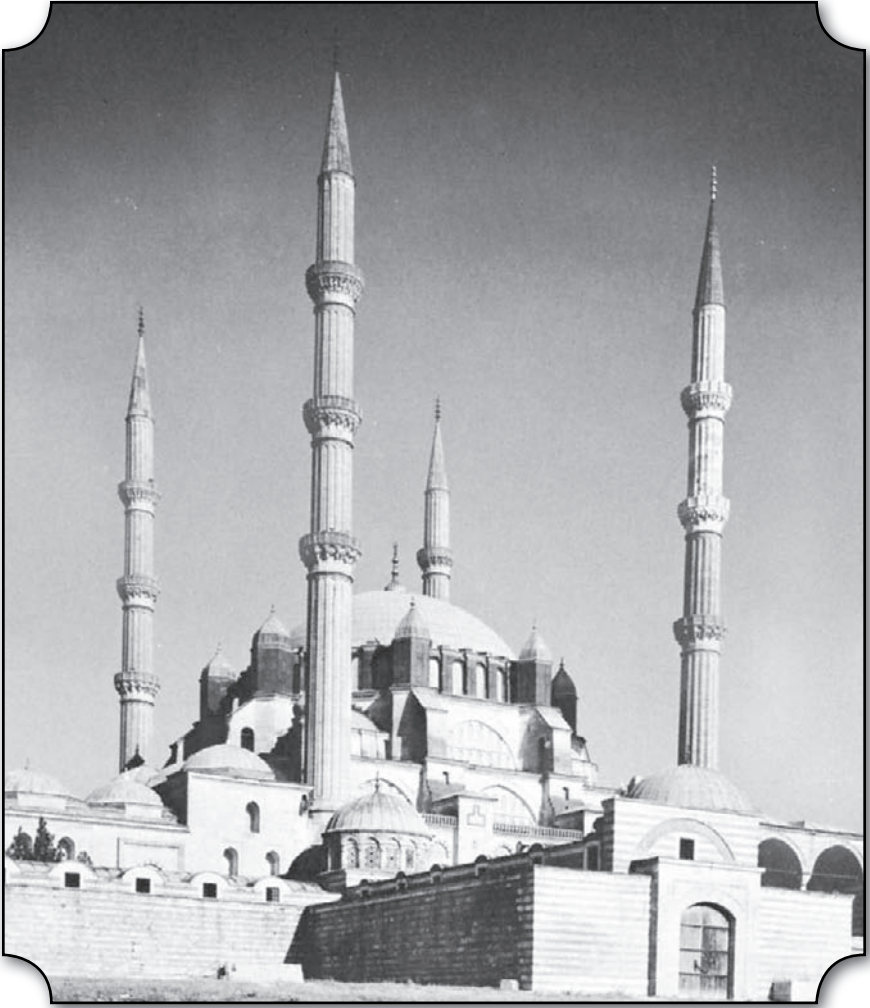
The last period of an Islamic artistic expression created within a context of political and intellectual independence

was centred in the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires. Although culturally very different from each other, these three imperial states shared a common past, a common consciousness of the nature of their ancestry and of the artistic forms associated with it. Painters and architects moved from one empire to the other, especially from Iran to India; Ottoman princes wrote Persian poetry, and Safavid rulers spoke Turkish. But most of all, they were aware that they were much closer to each other than to any non-Islamic cultural entity. However different their individual artistic forms may have been, they collected each other's works, exchanged gifts, and felt that they belonged to the same world.

Ottoman Art

The Ottomans were originally only one of the small Turkmen principalities (*beyliks*) that sprang up in Anatolia about 1300 after the collapse of Seljuq rule. In many ways, all the *beyliks* shared the same culture, but it was the extraordinary political and social attributes of the Ottomans that led them eventually to swallow up the other kingdoms, to conquer the Balkans, to take Constantinople in 1453, and to control almost the whole of the Arab world by 1520. Only in the 19th century did this complex empire begin to crumble. Thus, while Ottoman art, especially architecture, is best known through the monuments in Turkey, there is, in fact, evidence of Ottoman art extending from Algiers to Cairo in North Africa, to Damascus in the Levant, and in the Balkans from Sarajevo, Bos.-Her., to Sofia, Bulg.

Architecture

The grand tradition of Ottoman architecture, established in the 16th century, was derived from two main sources.

Exterior of the Selim Mosque at Edirne, Tur., designed by Sinan, 1569–75. K. Scholz/Shostal Associates

One was the rather complex development of new architectural forms that occurred all over Anatolia, especially at Manisa, Iznik, Bursa, and Selçuk in the 14th and early 15th centuries. In addition to the usual mosques, mausoleums, and madrasahs, a number of buildings called *tekke*s

were constructed to house dervishes (members of mystical fraternities) and other holy men who lived communally. The *tekke* (or *zeviye*) was often joined to a mosque or mausoleum. The entire complex was then called a *külliye*. All these buildings continued to develop the domed, central-plan structure, constructed by the Seljuqs in Anatolia. The other source of Ottoman architecture is Christian art. The Byzantine tradition, especially as embodied in Hagia Sophia, became a major source of inspiration. Byzantine influence appears in such features as stone and brick used together or in the use of pendentive dome construction. Also artistically influential were the contacts that the early Ottomans had with Italy. Thus, in several mosques at Bursa, Tur., there are stylistic parallels in the designs of the exterior facade and of windows, gates, and roofs to features found in Italian architecture. A distinctive feature of Ottoman architecture is that it drew from both Islamic and European artistic traditions and was, therefore, a part of both.

The apogee of Ottoman architecture was achieved in the great series of *külliye*s and mosques that still dominate the Istanbul skyline: the Fatih *külliye* (1463–70), the Bayezid Mosque (after 1491), the Selim Mosque (1522), the Sehzade *külliye* (1548), and the Süleyman *külliye* (after 1550). The Sehzade and Süleyman *külliye*s were built by Sinan, the greatest Ottoman architect, whose masterpiece is the Selim Mosque at Edirne, Tur. (1569–75). All of these buildings exhibit total clarity and logic in both plan and elevation; every part has been considered in relation to the whole, and each architectural element has acquired a hierarchic function in the total composition. Whatever is unnecessary has been eliminated. This simplicity of design in the late 15th and 16th centuries has often been attributed to the fact that Sinan and many Ottoman architects were first trained as military engineers. Everything in

Interior of the Selim Mosque at Edirne, Tur., designed by Sinan, 1569–75. K. Scholz/Shostal Associates

these buildings was subordinated to an imposing central dome. A sort of cascade of descending half domes, vaults, and ascending buttresses leads the eye up and down the building's exterior. Minarets, slender and numerous, frame the exterior composition, while the open space of

SINAN

(b. April 15, 1489, Agırnaz, Tur.—d. July 17, 1588, Constantinople [now Istanbul])

The most celebrated of all Ottoman architects was Sinan, whose ideas, perfected in the construction of mosques and other buildings, served as the basic themes for virtually all later Turkish religious and civic architecture.

The son of Greek Orthodox Christian parents, Sinan entered his father's trade as a stone mason and carpenter. In 1512, however, officials of the Ottoman government entered his village for the purpose of drafting Christian youths into the Janissary corps. Sinan was chosen, and he began a lifelong service to the Ottoman royal house and to the great sultan Süleyman I (reigned 1520–66) in particular. Following a period of schooling and rigorous training, Sinan became a construction officer in the Ottoman army, eventually rising to chief of the artillery.

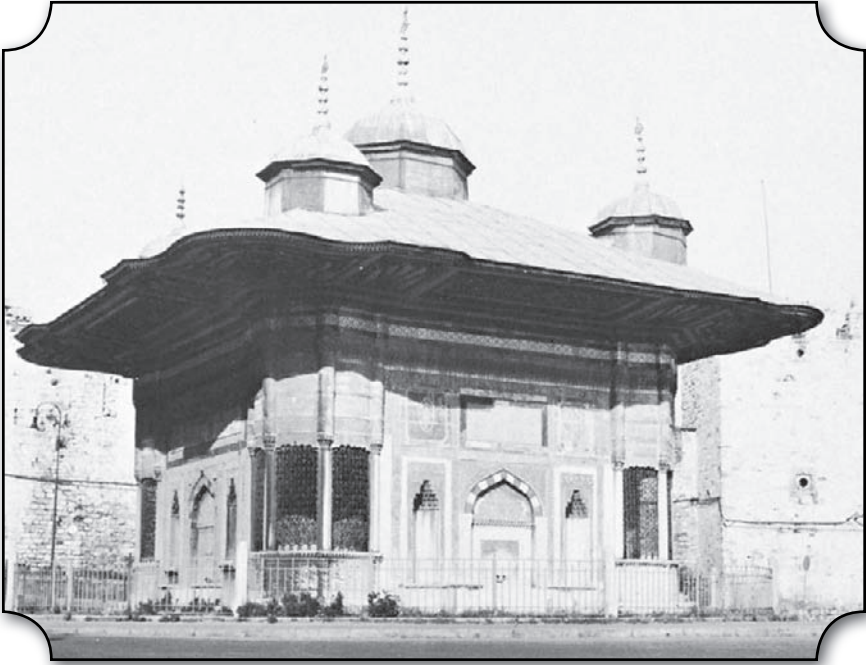
He first revealed his talents as an architect in the 1530s by designing and building military bridges and fortifications. In 1539 he completed his first nonmilitary building, and for the remaining 40 years of his life he was to work as the chief architect of the Ottoman Empire at a time when it was at the zenith of its political power and cultural brilliance. The number of projects Sinan undertook is massive—79 mosques, 34 palaces, 33 public baths, 19 tombs, 55 schools, 16 poorhouses, 7 madrasahs (religious schools), and 12 caravansaries, in addition to granaries, fountains, aqueducts, and hospitals. His three most famous works are the Sehzade Mosque and the Mosque of Süleyman I the Magnificent, both of which are in Istanbul, and the Selim Mosque at Edirne.

The Mosque of Süleyman in Istanbul was constructed in the years 1550–57 and is considered by many scholars to be his finest work. It was based on the design of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, a 6th-century masterpiece of Byzantine architecture that greatly influenced Sinan. The Mosque of Süleyman has a massive central dome that is pierced by 32 openings, thus giving the dome the

effect of lightness while also copiously illuminating the mosque's interior. It is one of the largest mosques ever built in the Ottoman Empire. Besides the place of worship, it contains a vast social complex comprising four madrasahs, a large hospital and medical school, a kitchen-refectory, and baths, shops, and stables.

Starting with the Byzantine church as a model, Sinan adapted the designs of his mosques to meet the needs of Muslim worship, which requires large open spaces for common prayer. As a result, the huge central dome became the focal point around which the design of the rest of the structure was developed. Sinan pioneered the use of smaller domes, half domes, and buttresses to lead the eye up the mosque's exterior to the central dome at its apex, and he used tall, slender minarets at the corners to frame the entire structure. This plan could yield striking exterior effects, as in the dramatic facade of the Selim Mosque. Sinan was able to convey a sense of size and power in all of his larger buildings. Many scholars consider his tomb monuments to be the finest examples of his smaller works.

the surrounding courts prevents the building from being swallowed by the surrounding city. These masterpieces of Ottoman architecture seem to be the final perfection of two great traditions: a stylistic and aesthetic tradition that had been indigenous to Istanbul since the construction of the Byzantine church of Hagia Sophia in the 6th century and the other Islamic tradition of domical construction dating to the 10th century.

The tragedy of Ottoman architecture is that it never managed to renew its 16th-century brilliance. Later buildings, such as the impressive Sultan Ahmed mosque in Istanbul, were mostly variations on Sinan's architecture, and sometimes there were revivals of older building types, especially in the provinces. Occasionally, as in the early 18th-century Nûruosman mosque in Istanbul, interesting new variants appear illustrating the little-known Turkish

Turkish Baroque style exemplified by the Fountain of Ahmed III, Istanbul, 1728. Josephine Powell, Rome

Baroque style. The latter, however, is more visible in ornamental details or in smaller buildings, especially the numerous fountains built in Istanbul in the 18th century. The sources of the Turkish Baroque are probably to be sought in the Baroque architecture of Vienna and the bordering Austro-Hungarian states. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, a consistent Europeanization of a local tradition occurs in the Ottoman empire.

While mosques and *külliye*s are the most characteristic monuments of Ottoman architecture, important secular buildings were also built: baths, caravansaries, and especially the huge palace complex of Topkapi Saray at Istanbul, in which 300 years of royal architecture are preserved in its elaborate pavilions, halls, and fountains.

Other Arts

Architectural decoration was generally subordinated to the structural forms or architectonic features of the building. A wide variety of themes and techniques originating from many different sources were used. One decorative device, the Ottoman version of colour-tile decoration, deserves particular mention, for it succeeds in transforming smaller buildings such as the mosque of Rüstem Pasa in Istanbul into a visual spectacle of brilliant colours. The history and development of this type of ceramic decoration is intimately tied to the complex and much controverted problem of the growth of several distinctive Ottoman schools of pottery: Iznik, Rhodian, and Damascus ware. Both in technique and in design, Ottoman ceramics are the only major examples of pottery produced in the late Islamic period.

Interior of the Rüstem Pasa Mosque, Istanbul, showing its coloured tile decoration. Ara Guler/EB Inc.

Ottoman miniature painting does not compare in quality with Persian painting, which originally influenced the Turkish school. Yet Ottoman miniatures do have a character of their own, either in the almost folk art effect of religious images or in the precise depictions of such daily events as military expeditions or great festivals. Among the finest examples of the latter is the manuscript *Surname-i Vehbi* painted by Levnî in the early 18th century.

The production of metalwork, wood inlaid with ivory, Usak carpets, and textiles flourished under the Ottomans, both in Istanbul workshops sponsored by the sultan and in numerous provincial centres. The influence of these ornamental objects on European decorative arts from the 16th through the 19th centuries was considerable.

Safavid Art

The Safavid dynasty was founded by Esmaʿil I (1501–24). The art of this dynasty reached its zenith during the reigns of Tahmasp (1524–76) and of ʿAbbas I (1588–1629). This phase of the Safavid period also marked the last significant development of Islamic art in Iran, for after the middle of the 17th century original creativity disappeared in all mediums. Rugs and objects in silver, gold, and enamel continued to be made and exhibited a considerable technical virtuosity, even when they were lacking in inventiveness.

The Safavids abandoned Central Asia and northeastern Iran to a new Uzbek dynasty that maintained the Timurid style in many buildings (especially at Bukhara) and briefly sponsored a minor and derivative school of painting. Only the great sanctuary of Meshed was being kept up and built up. For this is the time when Shiʿism became a state religion and for the first time in Islam there appeared an organized ecclesiastical system rather than

the more or less loose spiritual and practical leadership of old. The main centres of the Safavid empire were Tabriz and Ardabil in the northwest, with Kazvin in the central region, and, especially, Esfahan in the west. The Safavid period, like the Ottoman era, was an imperial age, and therefore there is hardly a part of Iran where either Safavid buildings or major Safavid restorations cannot be found. The dynasty spent much money and effort on the building of bridges, roads, and caravansaries to encourage trade.

Architecture

The best-known Safavid monuments are located at Esfahan where 'Abbas I built a whole new city. According to one description, it contained 162 mosques, 48 madrasahs, 1,802 commercial buildings, and 283 baths. Most of these buildings no longer survive, but what has remained constitutes some of the finest monuments of Islamic architecture.

At the centre of Esfahan is the Meydan-e Shah, a large open space, about 1,670 by 520 feet (510 by 158 metres), originally surrounded by trees. Used for polo games and parades, it could be illuminated with 50,000 lamps. Each side of the *meydan* was provided with the monumental facade of a building. On one of the smaller sides was the entrance to a large mosque, the celebrated Masjed-e Shah. On the other side was the entrance into the bazaar or marketplace. On the longer sides were the small funerary mosque of Sheykh Lotfollah and, facing it, the 'Ali Qapu, the "high gate," the first unit of a succession of palaces and gardens that extended beyond the *meydan*, most of which have now disappeared except for the Chehel Sotun, the palace of the "Forty Columns." The 'Ali Qapu was, in its lower floors, a semipublic place to which petitions could be brought, while its upper floors

are a world of pure fantasy—a succession of rooms, halls, and balconies overlooking the city, which were purely for the prince's pleasure.

The Meydan-e Shah unites in a single composition all the concerns of medieval Islamic architecture: prayer, commemoration, princely pleasure, trade, and spatial effect. None of the hundreds of other remaining Safavid monuments can match its historical importance, and in it also are found the major traits of Safavid construction and decoration. The forms are traditional, for the most part, and even in vaulting techniques and the use of coloured tiles it is to Timurid art that the Safavids looked for their models.

Painting

In the 16th and 17th centuries, possibly for the first time in Islamic art, painters were conscious of historical styles—even self-conscious. Miniatures from the past were collected, copied, and imitated. Patronage, however, was fickle. A royal whim would gather painters together or exile them. Many names of painters have been preserved, and there is little doubt that the whim of patrons was being countered by the artists' will to be socially and economically independent as well as individually recognized for their artistic talents. Too many different impulses, therefore, existed in Safavid Iran for painting to follow any clear line of development.

Three major painting styles, or schools, existed in the Safavid period. One school of miniature painting is exemplified by such masterpieces as the Houghton *Shah-nameh* (completed in 1537), the Jami *Haft awrang* (1556–1665), or the illustrations to stories from Hafez which have not been identified in detail. However different they are from each other, these large, colourful miniatures all were executed in a grand manner. Their compositions are complex,

individual faces appear in crowded masses, there is much diversification in landscape, and, despite a few ferocious details of monsters or of strongly caricaturized poses and expressions, these book illustrations are concerned with an idealized vision of life. The sources of this school lie with the Timurid academy. Behzad, Sultan Muhammad, Sheykhzadeh, Mir Sayyid 'Ali, Aqa Mirak, and Mahmud Musavvir continued and modified, each in his own way, the ideal of a balance between an overall composition and precise rendering of details.

The miniatures of the second tradition of Safavid painting seem at first to be like a detail out of the work of the previously discussed school. The same purity of colour, elegance of poses, interest in details, and assertion of the individual figure is found. Aqa Reza and Reza 'Abbasi (both active around 1600) excelled in these extraordinary portrayals of poets, musicians, courtiers, and aristocratic life in general.

In both traditions of painting, the beautiful personages depicted frequently are satirized; this note of satirical criticism is even more pronounced in portraiture of the time. But it is in pen or brush drawings, mostly dating from the 17th century, that the third aspect of Safavid painting appeared: an interest in genre, or the depiction of minor events of daily life (e.g., a washerwoman at work, a tailor sewing, an animal). With stunning precision Safavid artists showed a whole society falling apart with a cruel sympathy totally absent from the literary documents of the time.

While architecture and painting were the main artistic vehicles of the Safavids, the making of textiles and carpets was also of great importance. It is in the 16th century that a hitherto primarily nomadic and folk medium of the decorative arts was transformed into an expression of royal and urban tasks by the creation of

court workshops. The predominantly geometric themes of earlier Iranian carpets were not abandoned entirely but tended to be replaced by vegetal, animal, and even occasional human motifs. Great schools of carpetmaking developed particularly at Tabriz, Kashan, and Kerman.

Mughal Art

Since the culture of the Mughals was intimately connected to the indigenous Hindu traditions of the Indian subcontinent, their art will be treated here only synoptically.

The art of the Mughals was similar to that of the Ottomans in that it was a late imperial art of Muslim princes. Both styles were rooted in several centuries (at least from the 13th century onward) of adaptation of Islamic functions to indigenous forms. It was in the 14th-century architecture of South Asian sites such as Tughluqabad, Gaur, and Ahmadabad that a uniquely Indian type of Islamic hypostyle mosque was created, with a triple axial nave, corner towers, axial minarets, and cupolas. It was also during these centuries that the first mausoleums set in scenically spectacular locations were built. By then the conquering Muslims had fully learned how to use local methods of construction, and they adapted South Asian decorative techniques and motifs.

Mughal art was in continuous contact with Iran or, rather, with the Timurid world of the second half of the 15th century. The models and the memories were in Herat or Samarkand, but the artists were raided from Safavid Iran, and the continuous flow of painters from Iran to the Mughal empire is a key factor in understanding Mughal painting.

The mausoleum of Humayun in Delhi (1565–69), the city of Fatehpur Sikri (from 1569 onward), and the Taj Mahal at Agra (1631–53) summarize the development of Mughal architecture. In all three examples it can be seen

that what Mughal architecture brought to the Islamic tradition (other than traditional Indian themes, especially in decoration) was technical perfection in the use of red sandstone or marble as building and decorative materials.

In Mughal painting the kind of subject that tended to be illustrated was remarkably close to those used in Safavid history books—legendary stories, local events, portraits, genre scenes. What evolved quickly was a new manner of execution, and this style can be seen as early as about 1567, when the celebrated manuscript *Dastan-e Amir Hamzeh* ("Stories of Amir Hamzeh") was painted (some 200 miniatures remain and are found in most major collections of Indian miniatures). Traditional Iranian themes—battles, receptions, feasts—acquired monumentality, not only because of the inordinate size of the images but also because almost all of the objects and figures depicted were seen in terms of mass rather than line. Something of the colourfulness of Iranian painting was lost, but instead images acquired a greater expressive power. Mughal portraiture gave more of a sense of the individual than did the portraits of the Safavids.

In summary it can be said that the Mughals produced an art of extraordinary stylistic contrasts that reflected the complexities of its origins and of its aristocratic patronage.

ISLAMIC ART UNDER EUROPEAN INFLUENCE AND CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

It is extremely difficult to decide when, how, and to what extent European art began to affect the art of the traditional Muslim world. Ottoman architecture was from the beginning affected by Western influences. In Mughal India, European landscapes and Western spatial concerns influenced painting in the 18th century; and Persian

painting has exhibited constant Western influence since the 17th century. Thus, Islamic art began to be affected by European traditions before Europe began (in the 18th and 19th centuries) its conquests of most of the Muslim world. Since the Ottomans ruled North Africa (except Morocco), Egypt, Syria, Palestine, as well as the Balkans, much of the Muslim world was first introduced to "modern" European art through its adaptation in Istanbul or in other major Ottoman cities like Smyrna or Alexandria.

European influence tended to have been mostly limited to architecture. Nineteenth-century European engineers and architects, for example, adapted modern structural technology and decorative styles to local Islamic needs or idioms: the Suq al-Hamidiyah bazaar in Damascus was built with steel roofing; the Hejaz railway station at Damascus was decorated in a sort of Eastern Art Nouveau style.

During actual European occupation of Muslim territory, there was a conscious revival of traditional decorative arts, but new techniques were often employed. This especially occurred in India and Morocco, where the retail success of an art object depended less on the local tradition than on the taste of the Europeans. What was romantic to a European, therefore, was no longer part of the world of the newly enriched and Europeanized Muslim. Much of the Europeanized architecture was drab and pretentious. The only real artistic accomplishment of this period was in the preservation and encouragement of the traditional techniques and designs of the decorative arts. The latter often had to be maintained artificially through government subsidies, for the local market, except in Morocco or India, was more easily seduced by second-rate European objects.

During the period of occupation it was questioned whether alien techniques necessarily brought with them new forms. This mood was clearly expressed in literature

but less so in the visual arts, since the quality of Muslim art had deteriorated so much in the decades preceding European arrival that there was no longer a lively creative force to maintain. As various schools based on the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris were formed, however, the faculties and the students suffered from constant uncertainty as to whether they should preserve an art that was mostly artisanal or revolutionize it altogether.

It is much more difficult to define in broad terms the characteristics of art in Muslim countries after the formation of independent countries in the 1940s and '50s. Extensive planning programs and building projects have been undertaken in even the poorest countries; and the wealthy Arab states, as well as pre-revolutionary Iran, transformed their traditional cities and countryside with spectacular modern complexes ranging from housing projects to universities. Many of these buildings were planned and constructed by Western firms and architects, and some are ill-adapted to the physical conditions and visual traditions of the Muslim world. Others are interesting and even sensitive projects: spectacular and technically innovative, such as the Intercontinental Hotel in Mecca (Frei and Otto) and the Haj Terminal of the King Abdul Aziz International Airport at Jidda, Saudi Arabia (the U.S. firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill); or intelligent and imaginative, such as the government buildings of Dhaka, Bangladesh (designed by the late Louis Kahn of the United States), or in the numerous buildings designed by the Frenchman André Ravereau in Mali or Algeria. Furthermore, within the Muslim world emerged several schools of architects that adopted modes of an international language to suit local conditions. The oldest of these schools are in Turkey, where architects such as Eldhem and Cansever, among many others, built highly successful works of art. Other major Muslim contributors

to a contemporary Islamic architecture are the Iranians Nader Ardalan and Kemzan Diba, the Iraqis Rifat Chaderji and Muhammad Makkiya, the Jordanian Rassem Badran, or the Bangladeshi Mazhar ul-Islam. Finally, a unique message was being transmitted by the visionary Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy, who, in eloquent and prophetic terms, urged that the traditional forms and techniques of vernacular architecture be studied and adapted to contemporary needs. Directly or indirectly, his work has inspired many young architects in the Muslim world and has led to a host of fascinating private houses, mosques, and educational facilities. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture was instituted to encourage genuine and contemporary architectural innovation in Muslim lands.

The results of dozens of new art schools and of a more enlightened patronage than during the 19th century are perhaps less spectacular in the other arts, and especially in painting. In spite of several interesting attempts to deal with calligraphy, with geometric designs, or with local folk arts, successes so far have not been clearly identified. But Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Iraq, Pakistan, and Indonesia all have produced talented artists.

EVALUATION

In order to evaluate and to understand a millenary artistic tradition spread over an area extending from Spain to India, the emphasis of this chapter has had to be on those features that relate the monuments to each other rather than on the myriad of characteristics that differentiate them. A few words about the latter are essential, however, for very soon after the formation of Islamic culture (certainly by 1000), it seems clear that the nature of aesthetic impulses and of visual expectations began to vary. The question is one of determining what may be called the

break-off points: the areas, moments, or forces that led to differentiations. One such point is the early 14th century, for almost everywhere in Islam artistic functions, forms, and techniques were renewed. And it is quite easy to separate the arts that followed the turn of the century from those that preceded it.

Next to this chronological break-off, there are cultural ones, one might almost say ethnic ones, even though their ethnic association is often debatable. The clearest instance is that of Iran, whose artists and craftsmen, almost from the time of the first groups of Nishapur ceramics, used distinctive techniques, styles, and especially subjects, many of which can be traced to pre-Islamic times. The existence of a forceful Iranian personality in Islamic art is self-evident, and its impact is found in almost all other subdivisions of the culture. Although it was not a single or even (until the 16th century) a politically or socially unified personality, it found uniqueness, possibly because it soon became (as early as in the 9th century) strongly conscious of its ancient past. The fact of that consciousness seems more important than the individual and on the whole scarce motifs it picked up from the past. A more curious example is that of the Ottomans and of the Arabs. For their ethnic past, in Central Asia and Arabia, respectively, played only a minor part in the formation of their art and was often intellectually rejected. At the same time and with notable exceptions, neither entity consistently sought models and ideas in the pre-Islamic art of the region they had occupied. If they succeeded in creating an original artistic expression, it is in large part because of their success in creating a viable social order: the Ottoman imperial system of the 15th century, the urban order supported by military feudalism of Egypt, Syria, and North Africa. In these areas it is less a land than a society that provided the visual arts with their own distinctiveness,

and it is only in the late 20th century that Ottoman art began to be seen as Turkish and Mamluk art as Arab. The case of India lies somewhere between the Iranian and Ottoman instances. Created by an imperial overlay on a powerful alien culture, it never entirely escaped the forms of the latter.

Thus, one can distinguish the following large cultural entities within Islamic art: Ottoman, western Islamic, Egypt and Fertile Crescent, Iran, India. They were all distinctive by the early 14th century.

Among the features that appear to unite these various traditions and especially to separate them collectively from other large artistic and cultural units is the unity of functions. There was created, in other words, an Islamic religious and social function that is unique to Muslim lands. It was a diversified function, and its monuments are not alike in their forms. But they are alike in the human activity for which they were built. Limited in symbolic forms (mihrab, minaret, calligraphy as decoration), the Muslim function could be adapted to any architectural or ornamental tradition; and it was, not only in the cultures examined above, but in China, Indonesia, Africa—wherever Islam spread. The key concept here is that of a community of attitudes and of the uses of forms rather than of the making of forms.

There is a corollary to this conclusion that leads to the second level of an attempt to identify Islamic visual arts as a whole; namely, that, as Islam limited its system of religious visual symbols, it developed a set of secular values. From the very beginning there occurred a major art of trade and of the city, as well as an art of the palace. More than any other culture and certainly earlier than any other, the Muslim world created a number of secular tastes and sponsored techniques of secular beautification. The result lies,

on the one hand, in a striking succession of palaces from Khirbat al-Mafjar to the Alhambra or to Fatehpur Sikri. It lies also in the impetus given to techniques of ceramics, textiles, and metalwork. These all tended to be the techniques of the artisan, and their importance lies not so much in the manufacture of an occasional object of art as in the raising of the level of quality of all industrial or decorative arts. This particular feature of the Islamic tradition survived all political misfortunes. Remarkably beautiful objects were made as late as the early 19th century, and the techniques and traditions often were revived in the 20th century with considerable success. Historically, Islamic art became a sort of secular consciousness of artistic traditions elsewhere. Renaissance madonnas, for instance, were provided sometimes with halos containing Arabic inscriptions; bodies of saints were buried in Muslim cloth; Christian princes collected objects of Islamic art; and *turquerie*, or Turkish themes, lay behind one of the styles of European decorative arts in the Baroque period of the 17th and 18th centuries. All this was possible also because the themes of Islamic art almost never possessed the specificity of meaning that would make them unsuitable for use by others. Ambiguous in their abstraction of subjects and of styles, works of Islamic art tended at times to the facile multiplication of known formulas. Yet again at this level, it was the user who determined the value of the form used.

All this is not to say that Islamic art did not develop an internal visual vocabulary with a depth of its own. From the mosaics of the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus to the Alhambra or to certain Persian ceramics, one can determine the existence of concrete symbolic systems, royal and religious. It is even possible to see in the abstract arabesque or in certain uses of calligraphy attempts to express an early Muslim vision of the divine, while the glorious

colour of Iranian mosques may reflect the more complex mystical thought of Shi'ism. There is no doubt that further research will provide many more examples of a meaningful visual symbolic system in the Muslim world. But in most instances that have already been studied—in particular Umayyad and Seljuq art—the remarkable point has been that such symbols did not last and that they were soon misunderstood or ignored. This refusal to be committed to visual symbols is reflected in the little that is known about Islamic writing on art. It is only very incidentally that references are made to the value or meaning of visual expression; there are no theories on art, and even the religious injunctions against representations are a minute and almost incidental aspect of religious literature. Much more is known about individuals—ceramists and metalworkers in early times, painters and architects in later times. The emphasis has always been on their technical skill, on their ability to do visual tricks, or on the speed and efficiency with which they created. The artist was regarded not as a prophet or a genius but as a technically equipped individual who succeeds in beautifying the surroundings of all men. It is in this manner that one can perhaps best define the Muslim artistic tradition: it avoided the conscious search for a unique masterpiece, and it did not build monuments for the eternal glory of God. It sought instead to please man and to make every moment of his life as attractive and enjoyable as possible. There is a hedonistic element in Islamic art, therefore, but this hedonism is intellectually and emotionally mitigated by the conscious knowledge of the perishable character of all things human. In this fashion, Islamic art seen as a whole is a curious paradox, for as it softened and embellished life's activities, it was created with destructible materials, thereby reiterating Islam's conviction that only God remains.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to respond to the beauty of Islamic art and literature, but fully appreciating the aesthetic of the Islamic arts tradition requires a leap in understanding for those accustomed to some of the more aggressive and representational features of Western art. In comparison with Western literature, much of which is made up of linear storytelling, or of poetry that expresses the personal views or sensations of the poet, classic Islamic poetry is often dense with ideas and images drawn from earlier sources, arranged in an aesthetically pleasing pattern that shows only subtle signs of the artist's unique viewpoint. This multilayered, nonlinear approach, which is derived both from Islamic literature's long-standing tradition and from Islamic conceptions of the way art relates to faith, can be difficult to decode for those unfamiliar with the elements of those traditions.

Much of traditional Islamic art, too, relies on patterns, often of calligraphic elements, which are also rich with meaning. Because Islam had a history of trading since its earliest days in the Arabian Desert, beautiful craft objects, from carpets to ceramics, made their way to the farthest reaches of the Muslim world in Africa, Europe, and Asia. These influenced local tastes and helped to maintain a certain consistency in Muslim artistic styles across a vast territory. Styles of Muslim architecture also spread from one major city to another and have influenced architecture in European cities as well.

And yet, in spite of the underlying similarities that Muslims in diverse parts of the Islamic world shared, there were also varying styles, sensitivities, and mores that led to regional differences. For instance, while most Muslim societies shunned the idea of art that showed human beings, artists of the Mughal Empire created exquisite

miniatures that showed scenes of everyday life or illustrated popular tales and legends.

Literature, too, spread across national boundaries, aided by the use of various lingua francas, including Arabic and Persian, which allowed literary traditions to flow back and forth between different regions. This aesthetic of the Islamic world has also changed over time, in part through contact with the West. Muslim writers have used new literary forms, such as the novel, to express realities of life in various Muslim nations.

Finally, in considering Muslim art and literature, it is important to be aware that one of the reasons that its artistic traditions reached such a high level of sophistication is because of the vast wealth, power, and importance of the Islamic world itself. Its series of major empires, from the Umayyads to the Ottomans, straddled the crossroads of the civilized world, extending the reach of the Islamic world from Indonesia, China, and India in the east; to eastern and central Europe to the north; Spain and the Maghrib region, including Morocco to the west; and large chunks of both western and eastern sub-Saharan Africa to the south. Through this vast territory flowed many of the world's greatest treasures in a vast network of trade, from textiles to jewels. This source of fabulous wealth allowed cities of great sophistication to develop and encouraged learning and innovation that kept the spark of civilization alive, most famously during the Middle Ages, when European cultural life was arguably at a nadir. The artistic traditions of the Islamic world over its extensive 1,400-year history have vastly enriched humanity with their beauty, creativity, and multiple layers of meaning.

GLOSSARY

ambulatory An aisle or covered corridor.
apogee The highest point; climax.
arcuate Bent or curved.
belles lettres Entertaining, sophisticated light literature.
calligraphy A decorative form of handwriting, in many societies considered the supreme visual art.
caravansary In the Middle East, parts of North Africa, and Central Asia, an inn, usually near a court, where caravans and other travelers could rest at night.
compendium A brief treatment of a much larger subject; a concise treatise.
contrapuntal Referring to two or more independent melodies sounded together.
endogamy Marriage within a specific tribe or group.
ewer A pitcher in the shape of a vase.
faience Glazed pottery, especially of a fine variety with highly coloured designs.
hagiography The writing and critical study of the lives of saints.
hemistich A short or incomplete line in a poem.
heterodox Diverging from established or accepted doctrines; unorthodox.
hypostyle In architecture, an interior space whose roof rests on pillars or columns.
madrasah A school attached to a mosque, usually for the study of theology.

minaret A tower attached to a mosque with a balcony from which the people are called to prayer.
monorhyme A poem in which all the lines rhyme with each other.
morphological Referring to the study of form or structure.
oscillate To move back and forth, like a pendulum.
panegryic A lofty oration of praise.
parvenu A person of newly acquired wealth or position.
pastoral Relating to life in the country.
polemic Controversial argument, often of a religious nature.
polygynous Having more than one wife at once.
profligate Shamelessly immoral or delighting in extravagance.
prosody The study of poetic metre and versification.
purdah The seclusion of women from the sight of men or strangers.
qiblah The point toward which Muslims turn to pray; toward Mecca.
quatrain A four-line poem or stanza, most frequently with alternate rhymes.
scabrous Dealing with scandalous themes.
sheikh The leader or patriarch of a tribe.
sorghum A cereal grass bearing a dense grain used for making syrup.
trope Any literary or rhetorical device using words in a way other than their literal sense.
turgid Inflated; overblown; pompous.
vegetal Plant-like.
zoomorphic In the form of an animal.

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